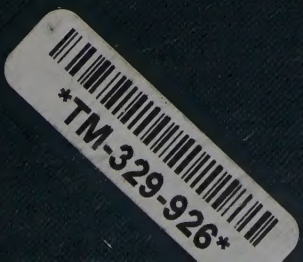
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SKETCHES AND STUDIES IN ITALY AND GREECE

FIRST SERIES

SKETCHES AND STUDIES

IN

ITALY AND GREECE

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

AUTHOR OF

'RENAISSANCE IN ITALY' 'STUDIES OF THE GREEK POETS'

ETC.

FIRST SERIES

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PREFATORY NOTE

In preparing this new edition of the late J. A. Symonds's three volumes of travels, 'Sketches in Italy and Greece,' 'Sketches and Studies in Italy,' and 'Italian Byways,' nothing has been changed except the order of the Essays. For the convenience of travellers a topographical arrangement has been adopted. This implied a new title to cover the contents of all three volumes, and 'Sketches and Studies in Italy and Greece' has been chosen as departing least from the author's own phraseology.

HORATIO F. BROWN.

Venice: *June* 1898.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Love of the Alps	1
Winter Nights at Davos	28
Bacchus in Graubünden	48
Old Towns of Provence	68
The Cornice	83
Ajaccio	104
Monte Generoso	121
Lombard Vignettes	133
Como and il Medeghino	173
Bergamo and Bartolommeo Colleoni	190
Crema and the Crucifix	209
Cherubino at the Scala Theatre	223
A Venetian Medley	254
The Gondolier's Wedding	292
A Cinque Cento Brutus	315
Two Dramatists of the Last Century	345

SKETCHES AND STUDIES
IN
ITALY AND GREECE

THE LOVE OF THE ALPS[1]

Of all the joys in life, none is greater than the joy of arriving on the outskirts of Switzerland at the end of a long dusty day's journey from Paris. The true epicure in refined pleasures will never travel to Basle by night. He courts the heat of the sun and the monotony of French plains,—their sluggish streams and never-ending poplar-trees,—for the sake of the evening coolness and the gradual approach to the great Alps, which await him at the close of the day. It is about Mulhausen that he begins to feel a change in the landscape. The fields broaden into rolling downs, watered by clear and running streams; the green Swiss thistle grows by riverside and cowshed; pines begin to tuft the slopes of gently rising hills; and now the sun has set, the stars come

[1] This Essay was written in 1866, and published in 1867. Reprinting it in 1879, after eighteen months spent continuously in one high valley of the Grisons, I feel how slight it is. For some amends, I take this opportunity of printing at the end of it a description of Davos in winter.

out, first Hesper, then the troop of lesser lights; and he feels —yes, indeed, there is now no mistake—the well-known, well-loved magical fresh air, that never fails to blow from snowy mountains and meadows watered by perennial streams. The last hour is one of exquisite enjoyment, and when he reaches Basle, he scarcely sleeps all night for hearing the swift Rhine beneath the balconies, and knowing that the moon is shining on its waters, through the town, beneath the bridges, between pasture-lands and copses, up the still mountain-girdled valleys to the ice-caves where the water springs. There is nothing in all experience of travelling like this. We may greet the Mediterranean at Marseilles with enthusiasm; on entering Rome by the Porta del Popolo, we may reflect with pride that we have reached the goal of our pilgrimage, and are at last among world-shaking memories. But neither Rome nor the Riviera wins our hearts like Switzerland. We do not lie awake in London thinking of them; we do not long so intensely, as the year comes round, to revisit them. Our affection is less a passion than that which we cherish for Switzerland.

Why, then, is this? What, after all, is the love of the Alps, and when and where did it begin? It is easier to ask these questions than to answer them. The classic nations hated mountains. Greek and Roman poets talk of them with disgust and dread. Nothing could have been more depressing to a courtier of Augustus than residence at Aosta, even though he found his theatres and triumphal arches there. Wherever classical feeling has predominated, this has been the case. Cellini's Memoirs, written in the height of pagan Renaissance, well express the aversion which a Florentine or Roman felt for the inhospitable wildernesses of Switzerland.[1] Dryden, in his dedication to 'The Indian

[1] See, however, what is said about Leo Battista Alberti in the sketch of Rimini in the second series.

Emperor,' says, 'High objects, it is true, attract the sight; but it looks up with pain on craggy rocks and barren mountains, and continues not intent on any object which is wanting in shades and green to entertain it.' Addison and Gray had no better epithets than 'rugged,' 'horrid,' and the like for Alpine landscape. The classic spirit was adverse to enthusiasm for mere nature. Humanity was too prominent, and city life absorbed all interests,—not to speak of what perhaps is the weightiest reason—that solitude, indifferent accommodation, and imperfect means of travelling, rendered mountainous countries peculiarly disagreeable. It is impossible to enjoy art or nature while suffering from fatigue and cold, dreading the attacks of robbers, and wondering whether you will find food and shelter at the end of your day's journey. Nor was it different in the Middle Ages. Then individuals had either no leisure from war or strife with the elements, or else they devoted themselves to the salvation of their souls. But when the ideas of the Middle Ages had decayed, when improved arts of life had freed men from servile subjection to daily needs, when the bondage of religious tyranny had been thrown off and political liberty allowed the full development of tastes and instincts, when, moreover, the classical traditions had lost their power, and courts and coteries became too narrow for the activity of man,—then suddenly it was discovered that Nature in herself possessed transcendent charms. It may seem absurd to class them all together; yet there is no doubt that the French Revolution, the criticism of the Bible, Pantheistic forms of religious feeling, landscape-painting, Alpine travelling, and the poetry of Nature, are all signs of the same movement—of a new Renaissance. Limitations of every sort have been shaken off during the last century; all forms have been destroyed, all questions asked. The classical spirit loved to

arrange, model, preserve traditions, obey laws. We are intolerant of everything that is not simple, unbiassed by prescription, liberal as the wind, and natural as the mountain crags. We go to feed this spirit of freedom among the Alps. What the virgin forests of America are to the Americans, the Alps are to us. What there is in these huge blocks and walls of granite crowned with ice that fascinates us, it is hard to analyse. Why, seeing that we find them so attractive, they should have repelled our ancestors of the fourth generation and all the world before them, is another mystery. We cannot explain what *rapport* there is between our human souls and these inequalities in the surface of the earth which we call Alps. Tennyson speaks of

> Some vague emotion of delight
> In gazing up an Alpine height,

and its vagueness eludes definition. The interest which physical science has created for natural objects has something to do with it. Curiosity and the charm of novelty increase this interest. No towns, no cultivated tracts of Europe however beautiful, form such a contrast to our London life as Switzerland. Then there is the health and joy that comes from exercise in open air; the senses freshened by good sleep; the blood quickened by a lighter and rarer atmosphere. Our modes of life, the breaking down of class privileges, the extension of education, which contribute to make the individual greater and society less, render the solitude of mountains refreshing. Facilities of travelling and improved accommodation leave us free to enjoy the natural beauty which we seek. Our minds, too, are prepared to sympathise with the inanimate world; we have learned to look on the universe as a whole, and ourselves as a part of it, related by close ties of friendship to all its other members.

Shelley's, Wordsworth's, Goethe's poetry has taught us this; we are all more or less Pantheists, worshippers of 'God in Nature,' convinced of the omnipresence of the informing mind.

Thus, when we admire the Alps, we are after all but children of the century. We follow its inspiration blindly; and while we think ourselves spontaneous in our ecstasy, perform the part for which we have been trained from childhood by the atmosphere in which we live. It is this very unconsciousness and universality of the impulse we obey which makes it hard to analyse. Contemporary history is difficult to write; to define the spirit of the age in which we live is still more difficult; to account for 'impressions which owe all their force to their identity with themselves' is most difficult of all. We must be content to feel, and not to analyse.

Rousseau has the credit of having invented the love of Nature. Perhaps he first expressed, in literature, the pleasures of open life among the mountains, of walking tours, of the '*école buissonnière*,' away from courts, and schools, and cities, which it is the fashion now to love. His bourgeois birth and tastes, his peculiar religious and social views, his intense self-engrossment,—all favoured the development of Nature-worship. But Rousseau was not alone, nor yet creative, in this instance. He was but one of the earliest to seize and express a new idea of growing humanity. For those who seem to be the most original in their inauguration of periods are only such as have been favourably placed by birth and education to imbibe the floating creeds of the whole race. They resemble the first cases of an epidemic, which become the centres of infection and propagate disease. At the time of Rousseau's greatness the French people were initiative. In politics, in literature, in fashions, and in

philosophy, they had for some time led the taste of Europe. But the sentiment which first received a clear and powerful expression in the works of Rousseau, soon declared itself in the arts and literature of other nations. Goethe, Wordsworth, and the earlier landscape-painters, proved that Germany and England were not far behind the French. In England this love of Nature for its own sake is indigenous, and has at all times been peculiarly characteristic of our genius. Therefore it is not surprising that our life and literature and art have been foremost in developing the sentiment of which we are speaking. Our poets, painters, and prose writers gave the tone to European thought in this respect. Our travellers in search of the adventurous and picturesque, our Alpine Club, have made of Switzerland an English playground.

The greatest period in our history was but a foreshadowing of this. To return to Nature-worship was but to reassume the habits of the Elizabethan age, altered indeed by all the changes of religion, politics, society, and science which the last three centuries have wrought, yet still, in its original love of free open life among the fields and woods, and on the sea, the same. Now the French national genius is classical. It reverts to the age of Louis XIV., and Rousseauism in their literature is as true an innovation and parenthesis as Pope-and-Drydenism was in ours. As in the age of the Reformation, so in this, the German element of the modern character predominates. During the two centuries from which we have emerged, the Latin element had the upper hand. Our love of the Alps is a Gothic, a Teutonic, instinct; sympathetic with all that is vague, infinite, and insubordinate to rules, at war with all that is defined and systematic in our genius. This we may perceive in individuals as well as in the broader aspects of arts and literatures. The classically minded man, the reader of Latin poets, the lover

of brilliant conversation, the frequenter of clubs and drawing-rooms, nice in his personal requirements, scrupulous in his choice of words, averse to unnecessary physical exertion, preferring town to country life, *cannot* deeply feel the charm of the Alps. Such a man will dislike German art, and however much he may strive to be Catholic in his tastes, will find as he grows older that his liking for Gothic architecture and modern painting diminish almost to aversion before an increasing admiration for Greek peristyles and the Medicean Venus. If in respect of speculation all men are either Platonists or Aristotelians, in respect of taste all men are either Greek or German.

At present the German, the indefinite, the natural, commands; the Greek, the finite, the cultivated, is in abeyance. We who talk so much about the feeling of the Alps, are creatures, not creators of our *cultus*,—a strange reflection, proving how much greater man is than men, the common reason of the age in which we live than our own reasons, its constituents and subjects.

Perhaps it is our modern tendency to 'individualism' which makes the Alps so much to us. Society is there reduced to a vanishing point—no claims are made on human sympathies—there is no need to toil in yoke-service with our fellows. We may be alone, dream our own dreams, and sound the depths of personality without the reproach of selfishness, without a restless wish to join in action or money-making or the pursuit of fame. To habitual residents among the Alps this absence of social duties and advantages may be barbarising, even brutalising. But to men wearied with too much civilisation, and deafened by the noise of great cities, it is beyond measure refreshing. Then, again, among the mountains history finds no place. The Alps have no past nor present nor future. The human beings who live upon their sides are at odds

with nature, clinging on for bare existence to the soil, sheltering themselves beneath protecting rocks from avalanches, damming up destructive streams, all but annihilated every spring. Man, who is paramount in the plain, is nothing here. His arts and sciences, and dynasties, and modes of life, and mighty works, and conquests and decays, demand our whole attention in Italy or Egypt. But here the mountains, immemorially the same, which were, which are, and which are to be, present a theatre on which the soul breathes freely and feels herself alone. Around her on all sides is God, and Nature, who is here the face of God and not the slave of man. The spirit of the world hath here not yet grown old. She is as young as on the first day; and the Alps are a symbol of the self-creating, self-sufficing, self-enjoying universe which lives for its own ends. For why do the slopes gleam with flowers, and the hillsides deck themselves with grass, and the inaccessible ledges of black rock bear their tufts of crimson primroses and flaunting tiger-lilies? Why, morning after morning, does the red dawn flush the pinnacles of Monte Rosa above cloud and mist unheeded? Why does the torrent shout, the avalanche reply in thunder to the music of the sun, the trees and rocks and meadows cry their 'Holy, Holy, Holy'? Surely not for us. We are an accident here, and even the few men whose eyes are fixed habitually upon these things are dead to them—the peasants do not even know the names of their own flowers, and sigh with envy when you tell them of the plains of Lincolnshire or Russian steppes.

But indeed there is something awful in the Alpine elevation above human things. We do not love Switzerland merely because we associate its thought with recollections of holidays and joyfulness. Some of the most solemn moments of life are spent high up above among the mountains, on the barren tops of rocky passes, where the soul has seemed to hear in solitude

a low controlling voice. It is almost necessary for the development of our deepest affections that some sad and sombre moments should be interchanged with hours of merriment and elasticity. It is this variety in the woof of daily life which endears our home to us; and perhaps none have fully loved the Alps who have not spent some days of meditation, or it may be of sorrow, among their solitudes. Splendid scenery, like music, has the power to make 'of grief itself a fiery chariot for mounting above the sources of grief,' to ennoble and refine our passions, and to teach us that our lives are merely moments in the years of the eternal Being. There are many, perhaps, who, within sight of some great scene among the Alps, upon the height of the Stelvio or the slopes of Mürren, or at night in the valley of Courmayeur, have felt themselves raised above cares and doubts and miseries by the mere recognition of unchangeable magnificence; have found a deep peace in the sense of their own nothingness. It is not granted to us every day to stand upon these pinnacles of rest and faith above the world. But having once stood there, how can we forget the station? How can we fail, amid the tumult of our common cares, to feel at times the hush of that far-off tranquillity? When our life is most commonplace, when we are ill or weary in city streets, we can remember the clouds upon the mountains we have seen, the sound of innumerable waterfalls, and the scent of countless flowers. A photograph of Bisson's or of Braun's, the name of some well-known valley, the picture of some Alpine plant, rouses the sacred hunger in our souls, and stirs again the faith in beauty and in rest beyond ourselves which no man can take from us. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to everything which enables us to rise above depressing and enslaving circumstances, which brings us nearer in some way or other to what is eternal in the universe, and which makes us know

that, whether we live or die, suffer or enjoy, life and gladness are still strong in the world. On this account, the proper attitude of the soul among the Alps is one of silence. It is almost impossible without a kind of impiety to frame in words the feelings they inspire. Yet there are some sayings, hallowed by long usage, which throng the mind through a whole summer's day, and seem in harmony with its emotions —some portions of the Psalms or lines of greatest poets, inarticulate hymns of Beethoven and Mendelssohn, waifs and strays not always apposite, but linked by strong and subtle chains of feeling with the grandeur of the mountains. This reverential feeling for the Alps is connected with the Pantheistic form of our religious sentiments to which I have before alluded. It is a trite remark, that even devout men of the present generation prefer temples *not* made with hands to churches, and worship God in the fields more contentedly than in their pews. What Mr. Ruskin calls 'the instinctive sense of the divine presence not formed into distinct belief' lies at the root of our profound veneration for the nobler aspects of mountain scenery. This instinctive sense has been very variously expressed by Goethe in Faust's celebrated confession of faith, by Shelley in the stanzas of 'Adonais,' which begin 'He is made one with nature,' by Wordsworth in the lines on Tintern Abbey, and lately by Mr. Roden Noel in his noble poems of Pantheism. It is more or less strongly felt by all who have recognised the indubitable fact that religious belief is undergoing a sure process of change from the dogmatic distinctness of the past to some at present dimly descried creed of the future. Such periods of transition are of necessity full of discomfort, doubt, and anxiety, vague, variable, and unsatisfying. The men in whose spirits the fermentation of the change is felt, who have abandoned their old moorings, and have not yet

reached the haven for which they are steering, cannot but be indistinct and undecided in their faith. The universe of which they form a part becomes important to them in its infinite immensity. The principles of beauty, goodness, order, and law, no longer connected in their minds with definite articles of faith, find symbols in the outer world. They are glad to fly at certain moments from mankind and its oppressive problems, for which religion no longer provides a satisfactory solution, to Nature, where they vaguely localise the spirit that broods over us controlling all our being. For such men Goethe's hymn is a form of faith, and born of such a mood are the following far humbler verses:—

At Mürren let the morning lead thee out
To walk upon the cold and cloven hills,
To hear the congregated mountains shout
Their pæan of a thousand foaming rills.
Raimented with intolerable light
The snow-peaks stand above thee, row on row
Arising, each a seraph in his might;
An organ each of varied stop doth blow.
Heaven's azure dome trembles through all her spheres,
Feeling that music vibrate; and the sun
Raises his tenor as he upward steers,
And all the glory-coated mists that run
Below him in the valley, hear his voice,
And cry unto the dewy fields, Rejoice!

There is a profound sympathy between music and fine scenery: they both affect us in the same way, stirring strong but undefined emotions, which express themselves in 'idle tears,' or evoking thoughts 'which lie,' as Wordsworth says, 'too deep for tears,' beyond the reach of any words. How little we know what multitudes of mingling reminiscences, held in solution by the mind, and colouring its fancy with the iridescence of variable hues, go to make up the sentiments

which music or which mountains stir! It is the very vagueness, changefulness, and dreamlike indistinctness of these feelings which cause their charm; they harmonise with the haziness of our beliefs and seem to make our very doubts melodious. For this reason it is obvious that unrestrained indulgence in the pleasures of music or of scenery may tend to destroy habits of clear thinking, sentimentalise the mind, and render it more apt to entertain embryonic fancies than to bring ideas to definite perfection.

If hours of thoughtfulness and seclusion are necessary to the development of a true love for the Alps, it is no less essential to a right understanding of their beauty that we should pass some wet and gloomy days among the mountains. The unclouded sunsets and sunrises which often follow one another in September in the Alps, have something terrible. They produce a satiety of splendour, and oppress the mind with a sense of perpetuity. I remember spending such a season in one of the Oberland valleys, high up above the pine-trees, in a little châlet. Morning after morning I awoke to see the sunbeams glittering on the Eiger and the Jungfrau; noon after noon the snow-fields blazed beneath a steady fire; evening after evening they shone like beacons in the red light of the setting sun. Then peak by peak they lost the glow; the soul passed from them, and they stood pale yet weirdly garish against the darkened sky. The stars came out, the moon shone, but not a cloud sailed over the untroubled heavens. Thus day after day for several weeks there was no change, till I was seized with an overpowering horror of unbroken calm. I left the valley for a time; and when I returned to it in wind and rain, I found that the partial veiling of the mountain heights restored the charm which I had lost and made me feel once more at home. The landscape takes a graver tone beneath the mist that hides the higher

peaks, and comes drifting, creeping, feeling, through the pines upon their slopes—white, silent, blinding vapour-wreaths around the sable spires. Sometimes the cloud descends and blots out everything. Again it lifts a little, showing cottages and distant Alps beneath its skirts. Then it sweeps over the whole valley like a veil, just broken here and there above a lonely châlet or a thread of distant dangling torrent foam. Sounds, too, beneath the mist are more strange. The torrent seems to have a hoarser voice and grinds the stones more passionately against its boulders. The cry of shepherds through the fog suggests the loneliness and danger of the hills. The bleating of penned sheep or goats, and the tinkling of the cow-bells, are mysteriously distant and yet distinct in the dull dead air. Then, again, how immeasurably high above our heads appear the domes and peaks of snow revealed through chasms in the drifting cloud; how desolate the glaciers and the avalanches in gleams of light that struggle through the mist! There is a leaden glare peculiar to clouds, which makes the snow and ice more lurid. Not far from the house where I am writing, the avalanche that swept away the bridge last winter is lying now, dripping away, dank and dirty, like a rotting whale. I can see it from my window, green beech-boughs nodding over it, forlorn larches bending their tattered branches by its side, splinters of broken pine protruding from its muddy caves, the boulders on its flank, and the hoarse hungry torrent tossing up its tongues to lick the ragged edge of snow. Close by, the meadows, spangled with yellow flowers and red and blue, look even more brilliant than if the sun were shining on them. Every cup and blade of grass is drinking. But the scene changes; the mist has turned into rain-clouds, and the steady rain drips down, incessant, blotting out the view. Then, too, what a joy it is if the clouds break towards evening with a north wind, and a rainbow in

the valley gives promise of a bright to-morrow! We look up to the cliffs above our heads, and see that they have just been powdered with the snow that is a sign of better weather.

Such rainy days ought to be spent in places like Seelisberg and Mürren, at the edge of precipices, in front of mountains, or above a lake. The cloud-masses crawl and tumble about the valleys like a brood of dragons; now creeping along the ledges of the rock with sinuous self-adjustment to its turns and twists; now launching out into the deep, repelled by battling winds, or driven onward in a coil of twisted and contorted serpent curls. In the midst of summer these wet seasons often end in a heavy fall of snow. You wake some morning to see the meadows which last night were gay with July flowers huddled up in snow a foot in depth. But fair weather does not tarry long to reappear. You put on your thickest boots and sally forth to find the great cups of the gentians full of snow, and to watch the rising of the cloud-wreaths under the hot sun. Bad dreams or sickly thoughts, dissipated by returning daylight or a friend's face, do not fly away more rapidly and pleasantly than those swift glory-coated mists that lose themselves we know not where in the blue depths of the sky.

In contrast with these rainy days nothing can be more perfect than clear moonlight nights. There is a terrace upon the roof of the inn at Courmayeur where one may spend hours in the silent watches, when all the world has gone to sleep beneath. The Mont Chétif and the Mont de la Saxe form a gigantic portal not unworthy of the pile that lies beyond. For Mont Blanc resembles a vast cathedral; its countless spires are scattered over a mass like that of the Duomo at Milan, rising into one tower at the end. By night the glaciers glitter in the steady moon; domes, pinnacles, and buttresses stand

clear of clouds. Needles of every height and most fantastic shapes rise from the central ridge, some solitary, like sharp arrows shot against the sky, some clustering into sheaves. On every horn of snow and bank of grassy hill stars sparkle, rising, setting, rolling round through the long silent night. Moonlight simplifies and softens the landscape. Colours become scarcely distinguishable, and forms, deprived of half their detail, gain in majesty and size. The mountains seem greater far by night than day—higher heights and deeper depths, more snowy pyramids, more beetling crags, softer meadows, and darker pines. The whole valley is hushed, but for the torrent and the chirping grasshopper and the striking of the village clocks. The black tower and the houses of Courmayeur in the foreground gleam beneath the moon until she reaches the edge of the Cramont, and then sinks quietly away, once more to reappear among the pines, then finally to leave the valley dark beneath the shadow of the mountain's bulk. Meanwhile the heights of snow still glitter in the steady light: they, too, will soon be dark, until the dawn breaks, tinging them with rose.

But it is not fair to dwell exclusively upon the more sombre aspect of Swiss beauty when there are so many lively scenes of which to speak. The sunlight and the freshness and the flowers of Alpine meadows form more than half the charm of Switzerland. The other day we walked to a pasture called the Col de Checruit, high up the valley of Courmayeur, where the spring was still in its first freshness. Gradually we climbed, by dusty roads and through hot fields where the grass had just been mown, beneath the fierce light of the morning sun. Not a breath of air was stirring, and the heavy pines hung overhead upon their crags, as if to fence the gorge from every wandering breeze. There is nothing more oppressive than these scorching sides of narrow rifts, shut in by woods

and precipices. But suddenly the valley broadened, the pines and larches disappeared, and we found ourselves upon a wide green semicircle of the softest meadows. Little rills of water went rushing through them, rippling over pebbles, rustling under dock leaves, and eddying against their wooden barriers. Far and wide 'you scarce could see the grass for flowers,' while on every side the tinkling of cow-bells, and the voices of shepherds calling to one another from the Alps, or singing at their work, were borne across the fields. As we climbed we came into still fresher pastures, where the snow had scarcely melted. There the goats and cattle were collected, and the shepherds sat among them, fondling the kids and calling them by name. When they called, the creatures came, expecting salt and bread. It was pretty to see them lying near their masters, playing and butting at them with their horns, or bleating for the sweet rye-bread. The women knitted stockings, laughing among themselves, and singing all the while. As soon as we reached them, they gathered round to talk. An old herdsman, who was clearly the patriarch of this Arcadia, asked us many questions in a slow deliberate voice. We told him who we were, and tried to interest him in the cattle-plague, which he appeared to regard as an evil very unreal and far away—like the murrain upon Pharaoh's herds which one reads about in Exodus. But he was courteous and polite, doing the honours of his pasture with simplicity and ease. He took us to his châlet and gave us bowls of pure cold milk. It was a funny little wooden house, clean and dark. The sky peeped through its tiles, and if shepherds were not in the habit of sleeping soundly all night long, they might count the setting and rising stars without lifting their heads from the pillow. He told us how far pleasanter they found the summer season than the long cold winter which they have to spend in gloomy houses in Courmayeur. This, indeed, is

the true pastoral life which poets have described—a happy summer holiday among the flowers, well occupied with simple cares, and harassed by 'no enemy but winter and rough weather.'

Very much of the charm of Switzerland belongs to simple things—to greetings from the herdsmen, the 'Guten Morgen,' and 'Guten Abend,' that are invariably given and taken upon mountain paths; to the tame creatures, with their large dark eyes, who raise their heads one moment from the pasture while you pass; and to the plants that grow beneath your feet. The latter end of May is the time when spring begins in the high Alps. Wherever sunlight smiles away a patch of snow, the brown turf soon becomes green velvet, and the velvet stars itself with red and white and gold and blue. You almost see the grass and lilies grow. First come pale crocuses and lilac soldanellas. These break the last dissolving clods of snow, and stand upon an island, with the cold wall they have thawed all round them. It is the fate of these poor flowers to spring and flourish on the very skirts of retreating winter; they soon wither—the frilled chalice of the soldanella shrivels up and the crocus fades away before the grass has grown; the sun, which is bringing all the other plants to life, scorches their tender petals. Often when summer has fairly come, you still may see their pearly cups and lilac bells by the side of avalanches, between the chill snow and the fiery sun, blooming and fading hour by hour. They have as it were but a Pisgah view of the promised land, of the spring which they are foremost to proclaim. Next come the clumsy gentians and yellow anemones, covered with soft down like fledgling birds. These are among the earliest and hardiest blossoms that embroider the high meadows with a diaper of blue and gold. About the same time primroses and auriculas begin to tuft the dripping rocks, while frail white fleur-de-lis,

like flakes of snow forgotten by the sun, and golden-balled ranunculuses join with forget-me-nots and cranesbill in a never-ending dance upon the grassy floor. Happy, too, is he who finds the lilies-of-the-valley clustering about the chestnut boles upon the Colma, or in the beechwood by the stream at Macugnaga, mixed with garnet-coloured columbines and fragrant white narcissus, which the people of the villages call 'Angiolini.' There, too, is Solomon's seal, with waxen bells and leaves expanded like the wings of hovering butterflies. But these lists of flowers are tiresome and cold; it would be better to draw the portrait of one which is particularly fascinating. I think that botanists have called it *Saxifraga cotyledon*; yet, in spite of its long name, it is beautiful and poetic. London-pride is the commonest of all the saxifrages; but the one of which I speak is as different from London-pride as a Plantagenet upon his throne from that last Plantagenet who died obscure and penniless some years ago. It is a great majestic flower, which plumes the granite rocks of Monte Rosa in the spring. At other times of the year you see a little tuft of fleshy leaves set like a cushion on cold ledges and dark places of dripping cliffs. You take it for a stonecrop—one of those weeds doomed to obscurity, and safe from being picked because they are so uninviting—and you pass it by incuriously. But about June it puts forth its power, and from the cushion of pale leaves there springs a strong pink stem, which rises upward for a while, and then curves down and breaks into a shower of snow-white blossoms. Far away the splendour gleams, hanging like a plume of ostrich-feathers from the roof of rock, waving to the wind, or stooping down to touch the water of the mountain stream that dashes it with dew. The snow at evening, glowing with a sunset flush, is not more rosy-pure than this cascade of pendent blossoms. It loves to be alone—inaccessible ledges, chasms where winds combat, or

moist caverns overarched near thundering falls, are the places that it seeks. I will not compare it to a spirit of the mountains or to a proud lonely soul, for such comparisons desecrate the simplicity of nature, and no simile can add a glory to the flower. It seems to have a conscious life of its own, so large and glorious it is, so sensitive to every breath of air, so nobly placed upon its bending stem, so royal in its solitude. I first saw it years ago on the Simplon, feathering the drizzling crags above Isella. Then we found it near Baveno, in a crack of sombre cliff beneath the mines. The other day we cut an armful opposite Varallo, by the Sésia, and then felt like murderers; it was so sad to hold in our hands the triumph of those many patient months, the full expansive life of the flower, the splendour visible from valleys and hillsides, the defenceless creature which had done its best to make the gloomy places of the Alps most beautiful.

After passing many weeks among the high Alps it is a pleasure to descend into the plains. The sunset, and sunrise, and the stars of Lombardy, its level horizons and vague misty distances, are a source of absolute relief after the narrow skies and embarrassed prospects of a mountain valley. Nor are the Alps themselves ever more imposing than when seen from Milan or the church-tower of Chivasso or the terrace of Novara, with a foreground of Italian cornfields and old city towers and rice-ground, golden-green beneath a Lombard sun. Half veiled by clouds, the mountains rise like visionary fortress walls of a celestial city—unapproachable, beyond the range of mortal feet. But those who know by old experience what friendly châlets, and cool meadows, and clear streams are hidden in their folds and valleys, send forth fond thoughts and messages, like carrier-pigeons, from the marble parapets of Milan, crying, 'Before another sun has set, I too shall rest beneath the shadow of their pines!' It is in truth not more

than a day's journey from Milan to the brink of snow at Macugnaga. But very sad it is to *leave* the Alps, to stand upon the terraces of Berne and waft ineffectual farewells. The unsympathising Aar rushes beneath ; and the snow-peaks, whom we love like friends, abide untroubled by the coming and the going of the world. The clouds drift over them—the sunset warms them with a fiery kiss. Night comes, and we are hurried far away to wake beside the Seine, remembering, with a pang of jealous passion, that the flowers on Alpine meadows are still blooming, and the rivulets still flowing with a ceaseless song, while Paris shops are all we see, and all we hear is the dull clatter of a Paris crowd.

THE ALPS IN WINTER

The gradual approach of winter is very lovely in the high Alps. The valley of Davos, where I am writing, more than five thousand feet above the sea, is not beautiful, as Alpine valleys go, though it has scenery both picturesque and grand within easy reach. But when summer is passing into autumn, even the bare slopes of the least romantic glen are glorified. Golden lights and crimson are cast over the grey-green world by the fading of innumerable plants. Then the larches begin to put on sallow tints that deepen into orange, burning against the solid blue sky like amber. The frosts are severe at night, and the meadow grass turns dry and wan. The last lilac crocuses die upon the fields. Icicles, hanging from water-course or mill-wheel, glitter in the noonday sunlight. The wind blows keenly from the north, and now the snow begins to fall and thaw and freeze, and fall and thaw again. The seasons are confused ; wonderful days of flawless purity are

intermingled with storm and gloom. At last the time comes when a great snowfall has to be expected. There is hard frost in the early morning, and at nine o'clock the thermometer stands at 2°. The sky is clear, but it clouds rapidly with films of cirrus and of stratus in the south and west. Soon it is covered over with grey vapour in a level sheet, all the hill-tops standing hard against the steely heavens. The cold wind from the west freezes the moustache to one's pipe-stem. By noon the air is thick with a coagulated mist; the temperature meanwhile has risen, and a little snow falls at intervals. The valleys are filled with a curious opaque blue, from which the peaks rise, phantom-like and pallid, into the grey air, scarcely distinguishable from their background. The pine-forests on the mountain-sides are of darkest indigo. There is an indescribable stillness and a sense of incubation. The wind has fallen. Later on, the snow-flakes flutter silently and sparely through the lifeless air. The most distant landscape is quite blotted out. After sunset the clouds have settled down upon the hills, and the snow comes in thick, impenetrable fleeces. At night our hair crackles and sparkles when we brush it. Next morning there is a foot and a half of finely powdered snow, and still the snow is falling. Strangely loom the châlets through the semi-solid whiteness. Yet the air is now dry and singularly soothing. The pines are heavy with their wadded coverings; now and again one shakes himself in silence, and his burden falls in a white cloud, to leave a black-green patch upon the hillside, whitening again as the imperturbable fall continues. The stakes by the roadside are almost buried. No sound is audible. Nothing is seen but the snow-plough, a long raft of planks with a heavy stone at its stem and a sharp prow, drawn by four strong horses, and driven by a young man erect upon the stem.

So we live through two days and nights, and on the third

a north wind blows. The snow-clouds break and hang upon the hills in scattered fleeces; glimpses of blue sky shine through, and sunlight glints along the heavy masses. The blues of the shadows are everywhere intense. As the clouds disperse, they form in moulded domes, tawny like sunburned marble in the distant south lands. Every châlet is a miracle of fantastic curves, built by the heavy hanging snow. Snow lies mounded on the roads and fields, writhed into loveliest wreaths, or outspread in the softest undulations. All the irregularities of the hills are softened into swelling billows like the mouldings of Titanic statuary.

It happened once or twice last winter that such a clearing after snowfall took place at full moon. Then the moon rose in a swirl of fleecy vapour—clouds above, beneath, and all around. The sky was blue as steel, and infinitely deep with mist-entangled stars. The horn above which she first appears stood carved of solid black, and through the valley's length from end to end yawned chasms and clefts of liquid darkness. As the moon rose, the clouds were conquered, and massed into rolling waves upon the ridges of the hills. The spaces of open sky grew still more blue. At last the silver light came flooding over all, and here and there the fresh snow glistened on the crags. There is movement, palpitation, life of light through earth and sky. To walk out on such a night, when the perturbation of storm is over and the heavens are free, is one of the greatest pleasures offered by this winter life. It is so light that you can read the smallest print with ease. The upper sky looks quite black, shading by violet and sapphire into turquoise upon the horizon. There is the colour of ivory upon the nearest snow-fields, and the distant peaks sparkle like silver, crystals glitter in all directions on the surface of the snow, white, yellow, and pale blue. The stars are exceedingly keen, but only a few can shine in the intensity of moon-

light. The air is perfectly still, and though icicles may be hanging from beard and moustache to the furs beneath one's chin, there is no sensation of extreme cold.

During the earlier frosts of the season, after the first snows have fallen, but when there is still plenty of moisture in the ground, the loveliest fern-fronds of pure rime may be found in myriads on the meadows. They are fashioned like perfect vegetable structures, opening fan-shaped upon crystal stems, and catching the sunbeams with the brilliancy of diamonds. Taken at certain angles, they decompose light into iridescent colours, appearing now like emeralds, rubies, or topazes, and now like Labrador spar, blending all hues in a wondrous sheen. When the lake freezes for the first time, its surface is of course quite black, and so transparent that it is easy to see the fishes swimming in the deep beneath; but here and there, where rime has fallen, there sparkle these fantastic flowers and ferns and mosses made of purest frost. Nothing, indeed, can be more fascinating than the new world revealed by frost. In shaded places of the valley you may walk through larches and leafless alder thickets by silent farms, all silvered over with hoar spangles—fairy forests, where the flowers and foliage are rime. The streams are flowing half-frozen over rocks sheeted with opaque green ice. Here it is strange to watch the swirl of water freeing itself from these frost-shackles, and to see it eddying beneath the overhanging eaves of frailest crystal-frosted snow. All is so silent, still, and weird in this white world, that one marvels when the spirit of winter will appear, or what shrill voices in the air will make his unimaginable magic audible. Nothing happens, however, to disturb the charm, save when a sunbeam cuts the chain of diamonds on an alder bough, and down they drift in a thin cloud of dust. It may be also that the air is full of floating crystals, like tiniest most restless fire-flies

rising and falling and passing crosswise in the sun-illumined shade of tree or mountain-side.

It is not easy to describe these beauties of the winter-world; and yet one word must be said about the sunsets. Let us walk out, therefore, towards the lake at four o'clock in mid-December. The thermometer is standing at 3°, and there is neither breath of wind nor cloud. Venus is just visible in rose and sapphire, and the thin young moon is beside her. To east and south the snowy ranges burn with yellow fire, deepening to orange and crimson hues, which die away and leave a greenish pallor. At last, the higher snows alone are livid with a last faint tinge of light, and all beneath is quite white. But the tide of glory turns. While the west grows momently more pale, the eastern heavens flush with afterglow, suffuse their spaces with pink and violet. Daffodil and tenderest emerald intermingle; and these colours spread until the west again has rose and primrose and sapphire wonderfully blent, and from the burning skies a light is cast upon the valley—a phantom light, less real, more like the hues of molten gems, than were the stationary flames of sunset. Venus and the moon meanwhile are silvery clear. Then the whole illumination fades like magic.

All the charms of which I have been writing are combined in a sledge-drive. With an arrowy gliding motion one passes through the snow-world as through a dream. In the sunlight the snow surface sparkles with its myriad stars of crystals. In the shadow it ceases to glitter, and assumes a blueness scarcely less blue than the sky. So the journey is like sailing through alternate tracts of light irradiate heavens, and interstellar spaces of the clearest and most flawless ether. The air is like the keen air of the highest glaciers. As we go, the bells keep up a drowsy tinkling at the horse's head. The whole landscape is transfigured—lifted high up out of com-

monplaceness. The little hills are Monte Rosas and Mont Blancs. Scale is annihilated, and nothing tells but form. There is hardly any colour except the blue of sky and shadow. Everything is traced in vanishing tints, passing from the almost amber of the distant sunlight through glowing white into pale greys and brighter blues and deep ethereal azure. The pines stand in black platoons upon the hillsides, with a tinge of red or orange on their sable. Some carry masses of snow. Others have shaken their plumes free. The châlets are like fairy houses or toys, waist-deep in stores of winter fuel. With their mellow tones of madder and umber on the weather-beaten woodwork relieved against the white, with fantastic icicles and folds of snow depending from their eaves, or curled like coverlids from roof and window-sill, they are far more picturesque than in the summer. Colour, wherever it is found, whether in these cottages or in a block of serpentine by the roadside, or in the golden bulrush blades by the lake shore, takes more than double value. It is shed upon the landscape like a spiritual and transparent veil. Most beautiful of all are the sweeping lines of pure untroubled snow, fold over fold of undulating softness, billowing along the skirts of the peaked hills. There is no conveying the charm of immaterial, aërial, lucid beauty, the feeling of purity and aloofness from sordid things, conveyed by the fine touch on all our senses of light, colour, form, and air, and motion, and rare tinkling sound. The magic is like a spirit mood of Shelley's lyric verse. And, what is perhaps most wonderful, this delicate delight may be enjoyed without fear in the coldest weather. It does not matter how low the temperature may be, if the sun is shining, the air dry, and the wind asleep.

Leaving the horse-sledges on the verge of some high hill-road, and trusting oneself to the little hand-sledge which the

people of the Grisons use, and which the English have christened by the Canadian term 'toboggan,' the excitement becomes far greater. The hand-sledge is about three feet long, fifteen inches wide, and half a foot above the ground, on runners shod with iron. Seated firmly at the back, and guiding with the feet in front, the rider skims down precipitous slopes and round perilous corners with a rapidity that beats a horse's pace. Winding through sombre pine-forests, where the torrent roars fitfully among caverns of barbed ice, and the glistening mountains tower above in their glory of sun-smitten snow, darting round the frozen ledges at the turnings of the road, silently gliding at a speed that seems incredible, it is so smooth, he traverses two or three miles without fatigue, carried onward by the mere momentum of his weight. It is a strange and great joy. The toboggan, under these conditions, might be compared to an enchanted boat shooting the rapids of a river; and what adds to its fascination is the entire loneliness in which the rider passes through those weird and ever-shifting scenes of winter radiance. Sometimes, when the snow is drifting up the pass, and the world is blank behind, before, and all around, it seems like plunging into chaos. The muffled pines loom fantastically through the drift as we rush past them, and the wind, ever and anon, detaches great masses of snow in clouds from their bent branches. Or again at night, when the moon is shining, and the sky is full of flaming stars, and the snow, frozen to the hardness of marble, sparkles with innumerable crystals, a new sense of strangeness and of joy is given to the solitude, the swiftness, and the silence of the exercise. No other circumstances invest the poetry of rapid motion with more fascination. Shelley, who so loved the fancy of a boat inspired with its own instinct of life, would have delighted in the game, and would probably have pursued it recklessly. At the same time,

as practised on a humbler scale nearer home, in company, and on a run selected for convenience rather than for picturesqueness, tobogganing is a very Bohemian amusement. No one who indulges in it can count on avoiding hard blows and violent upsets, nor will his efforts to maintain his equilibrium at the dangerous corners be invariably graceful.

Nothing, it might be imagined, could be more monotonous than an Alpine valley covered up with snow. And yet to one who has passed many months in that seclusion Nature herself presents no monotony; for the changes constantly wrought by light and cloud and alternations of weather on this landscape are infinitely various. The very simplicity of the conditions seems to assist the supreme artist. One day is wonderful because of its unsullied purity; not a cloud visible, and the pines clothed in velvet of rich green beneath a faultless canopy of light. The next presents a fretwork of fine film, wrought by the south wind over the whole sky, iridescent with delicate rainbow tints within the influences of the sun, and ever-changing shape. On another, when the turbulent Föhn is blowing, streamers of snow may be seen flying from the higher ridges against a pallid background of slaty cloud, while the gaunt ribs of the hills glisten below with fitful gleams of lurid light. At sunrise, one morning, stealthy and mysterious vapours clothe the mountains from their basement to the waist, while the peaks are glistening serenely in clear daylight. Another opens with silently falling snow. A third is rosy through the length and breadth of the dawn-smitten valley. It is, however, impossible to catalogue the indescribable variety of those beauties, which those who love nature may enjoy by simply waiting on the changes of the winter in a single station of the Alps.

WINTER NIGHTS AT DAVOS

I

Light, marvellously soft yet penetrating, everywhere diffused, everywhere reflected without radiance, poured from the moon high above our heads in a sky tinted through all shades and modulations of blue, from turquoise on the horizon to opaque sapphire at the zenith—*dolce color*. (It is difficult to use the word *colour* for this scene without suggesting an exaggeration. The blue is almost indefinable, yet felt. But if possible, the total effect of the night landscape should be rendered by careful exclusion of tints from the word-palette. The art of the etcher is more needed than that of the painter.) Heaven overhead is set with stars, shooting intensely, smouldering with dull red in Aldeboran, sparkling diamond-like in Sirius, changing from orange to crimson and green in the swart fire of yonder double star. On the snow this moonlight falls tenderly, not in hard white light and strong black shadow, but in tones of cream and ivory, rounding the curves of drift. The mountain peaks alone glisten as though they were built of silver burnished by an agate. Far away they rise diminished in stature by the all-pervading dimness of bright light, that erases the distinctions of daytime. On the path before our feet lie crystals of many hues, the splinters of a thousand gems. In the wood there are caverns of darkness, alternating with spaces of star-twinkled sky, or windows opened between russet stems and solid branches for the

moony sheen. The green of the pines is felt, although invisible, so soft in substance that it seems less like velvet than some materialised depth of dark green shadow.

II

Snow falling noiseless and unseen. One only knows that it is falling by the blinking of our eyes as the flakes settle on their lids and melt. The cottage windows shine red, and moving lanterns of belated wayfarers define the void around them. Yet the night is far from dark. The forests and the mountain-bulk beyond the valley loom softly large and just distinguishable through a pearly haze. The path is purest trackless whiteness, almost dazzling though it has no light. This was what Dante felt when he reached the lunar sphere :

> Pareva a me, che nube ne coprisse
> Lucida, spessa, solida e pulita.

Walking silent, with insensible footfall, slowly, for the snow is deep above our ankles, we wonder what the world would be like if this were all. Could the human race be acclimatised to this monotony (we say) perhaps emotion would be rarer, yet more poignant, suspended brooding on itself, and wakening by flashes to a quintessential mood. Then fancy changes, and the thought occurs that even so must be a planet, not yet wholly made, nor called to take her place among the sisterhood of light and song.

III

Sunset was fading out upon the Rhætikon and still reflected from the Seehorn on the lake, when we entered the gorge of the Fluela—dense pines on either hand, a mounting drift of snow in front, and faint peaks, paling from rose to saffron, far above, beyond. There was no sound but a tinkling stream

and the continual jingle of our sledge-bells. We drove at a foot's pace, our horse finding his own path. When we left the forest, the light had all gone except for some almost imperceptible touches of primrose on the eastern horns. It was a moonless night, but the sky was alive with stars, and now and then one fell. The last house in the valley was soon passed, and we entered those bleak gorges where the wind, fine, noiseless, penetrating like an edge of steel, poured slantwise on us from the north. As we rose, the stars to west seemed far beneath us, and the Great Bear sprawled upon the ridges of the lower hills outspread. We kept slowly moving onward, upward, into what seemed like a thin impalpable mist, but was immeasurable tracts of snow. The last cembras were left behind, immovable upon dark granite boulders on our right. We entered a formless and unbillowed sea of greyness, from which there rose dim mountain-flanks that lost themselves in air. Up, ever up, and still below us westward sank the stars. We were now 7500 feet above sea-level, and the December night was rigid with intensity of frost. The cold, and movement, and solemnity of space drowsed every sense.

IV

The memory of things seen and done in moonlight is like the memory of dreams. It is as a dream that I recall the night of our tobogganing to Klosters, though it was full enough of active energy. The moon was in her second quarter, slightly filmed with very high thin clouds, that disappeared as night advanced, leaving the sky and stars in all their lustre. A sharp frost, sinking to three degrees above zero Fahrenheit, with a fine pure wind, such wind as here they call 'the mountain breath.' We drove to Wolfgang in a two-horse sledge, four of us inside, and our two Christians on the box. Up

there, where the Alps of Death descend to join the Lakehorn Alps, above the Wolfswalk, there is a world of whiteness—frozen ridges, engraved like cameos of aërial onyx upon the dark, star-tremulous sky; sculptured buttresses of snow, enclosing hollows filled with diaphanous shadow, and sweeping aloft into the upland fields of pure clear drift. Then came the swift descent, the plunge into the pines, moon-silvered on their frosted tops. The battalions of spruce that climb those hills defined the dazzling snow from which they sprang, like the black tufts upon an ermine robe. At the proper moment we left our sledge, and the big Christian took his reins in hand to follow us. Furs and greatcoats were abandoned. Each stood forth tightly accoutred, with short coat, and clinging cap, and gaitered legs for the toboggan. Off we started in line, with but brief interval between, at first slowly, then glidingly, and when the impetus was gained, with darting, bounding, almost savage swiftness—sweeping round corners, cutting the hard snow-path with keen runners, avoiding the deep ruts, trusting to chance, taking advantage of smooth places, till the rush and swing and downward swoop became mechanical. Space was devoured. Into the massy shadows of the forest, where the pines joined overhead, we pierced without a sound, and felt far more than saw the great rocks with their icicles; and out again, emerging into moonlight, met the valley spread beneath our feet, the mighty peaks of the Silvretta and the vast blue sky. On, on, hurrying, delaying not, the woods and hills rushed by. Crystals upon the snow-banks glittered to the stars. Our souls would fain have stayed to drink these marvels of the moon-world, but our limbs refused. The magic of movement was upon us, and eight minutes swallowed the varying impressions of two musical miles. The village lights drew near and nearer, then the sombre village huts, and soon the speed grew less, and soon we glided to our rest into the sleeping village street.

V

It was just past midnight. The moon had fallen to the western horns. Orion's belt lay bar-like on the opening of the pass, and Sirius shot flame on the Seehorn. A more crystalline night, more full of fulgent stars, was never seen, stars everywhere, but mostly scattered in large sparkles on the snow. Big Christian went in front, tugging toboggans by their strings, as Gulliver, in some old woodcut, drew the fleets of Lilliput. Through the brown wood-châlets of Selfrangr, up to the undulating meadows, where the snow slept pure and crisp, he led us. There we sat awhile and drank the clear air, cooled to zero, but innocent and mild as mother Nature's milk. Then in an instant, down, down through the hamlet, with its châlets, stables, pumps, and logs, the slumbrous hamlet, where one dog barked, and darkness dwelt upon the path of ice, down with the tempest of a dreadful speed, that shot each rider upward in the air, and made the frame of the toboggan tremble—down over hillocks of hard frozen snow, dashing and bounding, to the river and the bridge. No bones were broken, though the race was thrice renewed, and men were spilt upon the roadside by some furious plunge. This amusement has the charm of peril and the unforeseen. In no wise else can colder, keener air be drunken at such furious speed. The joy, too, of the engine-driver and the steeplechaser is upon us. Alas, that it should be so short! If only roads were better made for the purpose, there would be no end to it; for the toboggan cannot lose his wind. But the good thing fails at last, and from the silence of the moon we pass into the silence of the fields of sleep.

VI

The new stable is a huge wooden building, with raftered lofts to stow the hay, and stalls for many cows and horses. It stands snugly in an angle of the pine-wood, bordering upon the great horse-meadow. Here at night the air is warm and tepid with the breath of kine. Returning from my forest walk, I spy one window yellow in the moonlight with a lamp. I lift the latch. The hound knows me, and does not bark. I enter the stable, where six horses are munching their last meal. Upon the corn-bin sits a knecht. We light our pipes and talk. He tells me of the valley of Arosa (a hawk's flight westward over yonder hills), how deep in grass its summer lawns, how crystal-clear its stream, how blue its little lakes, how pure, without a taint of mist, 'too beautiful to paint,' its sky in winter! This knecht is an Ardüser, and the valley of Arosa lifts itself to heaven above his Langwies home. It is his duty now to harness a sleigh for some night-work. We shake hands and part—I to sleep, he for the snow.

VII

The lake has frozen late this year, and there are places in it where the ice is not yet firm. Little snow has fallen since it froze—about three inches at the deepest, driven by winds and wrinkled like the ribbed sea-sand. Here and there the ice-floor is quite black and clear, reflecting stars, and dark as heaven's own depths. Elsewhere it is of a suspicious whiteness, blurred in surface, with jagged cracks and chasms, treacherously mended by the hand of frost. Moving slowly, the snow cries beneath our feet, and the big crystals tinkle. These are shaped like fern-fronds, growing fan-wise from a point, and set at various angles, so that the moonlight takes

them with capricious touch. They flash, and are quenched, and flash again, light darting to light along the level surface, while the sailing planets and the stars look down complacent at this mimicry of heaven. Everything above, around, beneath, is very beautiful—the slumbrous woods, the snowy fells, and the far distance painted in faint blue upon the tender background of the sky. Everything is placid and beautiful; and yet the place is terrible. For, as we walk, the lake groans, with throttled sobs, and sudden cracklings of its joints, and sighs that shiver, undulating from afar, and pass beneath our feet, and die away in distance when they reach the shore. And now and then an upper crust of ice gives way; and will the gulfs then drag us down? We are in the very centre of the lake. There is no use in thinking or in taking heed. Enjoy the moment, then, and march. Enjoy the contrast between this circumambient serenity and sweetness, and the dreadful sense of insecurity beneath. Is not, indeed, our whole life of this nature? A passage over perilous deeps, roofed by infinity and sempiternal things, surrounded too with evanescent forms, that like these crystals, trodden underfoot, or melted by the Föhn-wind into dew, flash, in some lucky moment, with a light that mimics stars! But to allegorise and sermonise is out of place here. It is but the expedient of those who cannot etch sensation by the burin of their art of words.

VIII

It is ten o'clock upon Sylvester Abend, or New Year's Eve. Herr Buol sits with his wife at the head of his long table. His family and serving folk are round him. There is his mother, with little Ursula, his child, upon her knee. The old lady is the mother of four comely daughters and nine

stalwart sons, the eldest of whom is now a grizzled man. Besides our host, four of the brothers are here to-night; the handsome melancholy Georg, who is so gentle in his speech; Simeon, with his diplomatic face; Florian, the student of medicine; and my friend, colossal-breasted Christian. Palmy came a little later, worried with many cares, but happy to his heart's core. No optimist was ever more convinced of his philosophy than Palmy. After them, below the salt, were ranged the knechts and porters, the marmiton from the kitchen, and innumerable maids. The board was tesselated with plates of birnen-brod and eier-brod, küchli and cheese and butter; and Georg stirred grampampuli in a mighty metal bowl. For the uninitiated, it may be needful to explain these Davos delicacies. Birnen-brod is what the Scotch would call a 'bun,' or massive cake, composed of sliced pears, almonds, spices, and a little flour. Eier-brod is a saffron-coloured sweet bread, made with eggs; and küchli is a kind of pastry, crisp and flimsy, fashioned into various devices of cross, star, and scroll. Grampampuli is simply brandy burnt with sugar, the most unsophisticated punch I ever drank from tumblers. The frugal people of Davos, who live on bread and cheese and dried meat all the year, indulge themselves but once with these unwonted dainties in the winter.

The occasion was cheerful, and yet a little solemn. The scene was feudal. For these Buols are the scions of a warrior race:

> A race illustrious for heroic deeds;
> Humbled, but not degraded.

During the six centuries through which they have lived nobles in Davos, they have sent forth scores of fighting men to foreign lands, ambassadors to France and Venice and the Milanese, governors to Chiavenna and Bregaglia and the much-contested Valtelline. Members of their house are

Counts of Buol-Schauenstein in Austria, Freiherrs of Muhlingen and Berenberg in the now German Empire. They keep the patent of nobility conferred on them by Henri IV. Their ancient coat—parted per pale azure and argent, with a dame of the fourteenth century bearing in her hand a rose, all counterchanged—is carved in wood and monumental marble on the churches and old houses hereabouts. And from immemorial antiquity the Buol of Davos has sat thus on Sylvester Abend with family and folk around him, summoned from alp and snowy field to drink grampampuli and break the birnen-brod.

These rites performed, the men and maids began to sing —brown arms lounging on the table, and red hands folded in white aprons—serious at first in hymn-like cadences, then breaking into wilder measures with a jodel at the close. There is a measured solemnity in the performance, which strikes the stranger as somewhat comic. But the singing was good; the voices strong and clear in tone, no hesitation and no shirking of the melody. It was clear that the singers enjoyed the music for its own sake, with half-shut eyes, as they take dancing, solidly, with deep-drawn breath, sustained and indefatigable. But eleven struck; and the two Christians, my old friend, and Palmy, said we should be late for church. They had promised to take me with them to see bell-ringing in the tower. All the young men of the village meet, and draw lots in the Stube of the Rathhaus. One party tolls the old year out; the other rings the new year in. He who comes last is sconced three litres of Veltliner for the company. This jovial fine was ours to pay to-night.

When we came into the air, we found a bitter frost; the whole sky clouded over; a north wind whirling snow from alp and forest through the murky gloom. The benches and

broad walnut tables of the Rathhaus were crowded with men, in shaggy homespun of brown and grey frieze. Its low wooden roof and walls enclosed an atmosphere of smoke, denser than the external snow-drift. But our welcome was hearty, and we found a score of friends. Titanic Fopp, whose limbs are Michelangelesque in length; spectacled Morosani; the little tailor Kramer, with a French horn on his knees; the puckered forehead of the Baumeister; the Troll-shaped postman; peasants and woodmen, known on far excursions upon pass and upland valley. Not one but carried on his face the memory of winter strife with avalanche and snow-drift, of horses struggling through Fluela whirlwinds, and wine-casks tugged across Bernina, and haystacks guided down precipitous gullies at thundering speed 'twixt pine and pine, and larches felled in distant glens beside the frozen watercourses. Here we were, all met together for one hour from our several homes and occupations, to welcome in the year with clinked glasses and cries of *Prosit Neujahr!*

The tolling bells above us stopped. Our turn had come. Out into the snowy air we tumbled, beneath the row of wolves' heads that adorn the pent-house roof. A few steps brought us to the still God's acre, where the snow lay deep and cold upon high-mounded graves of many generations. We crossed it silently, bent our heads to the low Gothic arch, and stood within the tower. It was thick darkness there. But far above, the bells began again to clash and jangle confusedly, with volleys of demonic joy. Successive flights of ladders, each ending in a giddy platform hung across the gloom, climb to the height of some hundred and fifty feet; and all their rungs were crusted with frozen snow, deposited by trampling boots. For up and down these stairs, ascending and descending, moved other than angels—the frieze-

jacketed Bürschen, Grisons bears, rejoicing in their exercise, exhilarated with the tingling noise of beaten metal. We reached the first room safely, guided by firm-footed Christian, whose one candle just defined the rough walls and the slippery steps. There we found a band of boys, pulling ropes that set the bells in motion. But our destination was not reached. One more aërial ladder, perpendicular in darkness, brought us swiftly to the home of sound. It is a small square chamber, where the bells are hung, filled with the interlacement of enormous beams, and pierced to north and south by open windows, from whose parapets I saw the village and the valley spread beneath. The fierce wind hurried through it, charged with snow, and its narrow space was thronged with men. Men on the platform, men on the window-sills, men grappling the bells with iron arms, men brushing by to reach the stairs, crossing, recrossing, shouldering their mates, drinking red wine from gigantic beakers, exploding crackers, firing squibs, shouting and yelling in corybantic chorus. They yelled and shouted, one could see it by their open mouths and glittering eyes ; but not a sound from human lungs could reach our ears. The overwhelming incessant thunder of the bells drowned all. It thrilled the tympanum, ran through the marrow of the spine, vibrated in the inmost entrails. Yet the brain was only steadied and excited by this sea of brazen noise. After a few moments I knew the place and felt at home in it. Then I enjoyed a spectacle which sculptors might have envied. For they ring the bells in Davos after this fashion:—The lads below set them going with ropes. The men above climb in pairs on ladders to the beams from which they are suspended. Two mighty pine-trees, roughly squared and built into the walls, extend from side to side across the belfry. Another from which the bells hang, connects these massive trunks at right

angles. Just where the central beam is wedged into the two parallel supports, the ladders reach them from each side of the belfry, so that, bending from the higher rung of the ladder, and leaning over, stayed upon the lateral beam, each pair of men can keep one bell in movement with their hands. Each comrade plants one leg upon the ladder, and sets the other knee firmly athwart the horizontal pine. Then round each other's waist they twine left arm and right. The two have thus become one man. Right arm and left are free to grasp the bell's horns, sprouting at its crest beneath the beam. With a grave rhythmic motion, bending sideward in a close embrace, swaying and returning to their centre from the well-knit loins, they drive the force of each strong muscle into the vexed bell. The impact is earnest at first, but soon it becomes frantic. The men take something from each other of exalted enthusiasm. This efflux of their combined energies inspires them and exasperates the mighty resonance of metal which they rule. They are lost in a trance of what approximates to dervish passion—so thrilling is the surge of sound, so potent are the rhythms they obey. Men come and tug them by the heels. One grasps the starting thews upon their calves. Another is impatient for their place. But they strain still, locked together, and forgetful of the world. At length they have enough: then slowly, clingingly unclasp, turn round with gazing eyes, and are resumed, sedately, into the diurnal round of common life. Another pair is in their room upon the beam.

The Englishman who saw these things stood looking up, enveloped in his ulster with the grey cowl thrust upon his forehead, like a monk. One candle cast a grotesque shadow of him on the plastered wall. And when his chance came, though he was but a weakling, he too climbed and for some moments hugged the beam, and felt the madness of the

swinging bell. Descending, he wondered long and strangely whether he ascribed too much of feeling to the men he watched. But no, that was impossible. There are emotions deeply seated in the joy of exercise, when the body is brought into play, and masses move in concert, of which the subject is but half conscious. Music and dance, and the delirium of battle or the chase, act thus upon spontaneous natures. The mystery of rhythm and associated energy and blood tingling in sympathy is here. It lies at the root of man's most tyrannous instinctive impulses.

It was past one when we reached home, and now a meditative man might well have gone to bed. But no one thinks of sleeping on Sylvester Abend. So there followed bowls of punch in one friend's room, where English, French, and Germans blent together in convivial Babel; and flasks of old Montagner in another. Palmy, at this period, wore an archdeacon's hat, and smoked a churchwarden's pipe; and neither were his own, nor did he derive anything ecclesiastical or Anglican from the association. Late in the morning we must sally forth, they said, and roam the town. For it is the custom here on New Year's night to greet acquaintances, and ask for hospitality, and no one may deny these self-invited guests. We turned out again into the grey snow-swept gloom, a curious Comus—not at all like Greeks, for we had neither torches in our hands nor rose-wreaths to suspend upon a lady's door-posts. And yet I could not refrain, at this supreme moment of jollity, in the zero temperature, amid my Grisons friends, from humming to myself verses from the Greek Anthology:—

> The die is cast! Nay, light the torch!
> I'll take the road! Up, courage, ho!
> Why linger pondering in the porch?
> Upon Love's revel we will go!

Shake off those fumes of wine! Hang care
And caution! What has Love to do
With prudence? Let the torches flare!
Quick, drown the doubts that hampered you!

Cast weary wisdom to the wind!
One thing, but one alone, I know:
Love bent e'en Jove and made him blind
Upon Love's revel we will go!

And then again :—

I've drunk sheer madness! Not with wine
But old fantastic tales, I'll arm
My heart in heedlessness divine,
And dare the road, nor dream of harm!

I'll join Love's rout! Let thunder break,
Let lightning blast me by the way!
Invulnerable Love shall shake
His ægis o'er my head to-day.

This last epigram was not inappropriate to an invalid about to begin the fifth act in a roystering night's adventure. And still once more :—

Cold blows the winter wind; 'tis Love,
Whose sweet eyes swim with honeyed tears,
That bears me to thy doors, my love,
Tossed by the storm of hopes and fears.

Cold blows the blast of aching Love;
But be thou for my wandering sail,
Adrift upon these waves of love,
Safe harbour from the whistling gale!

However, upon this occasion, though we had winter-wind enough, and cold enough, there was not much love in the business. My arm was firmly clenched in Christian Buol's, and Christian Palmy came behind, trolling out songs in Italian dialect, with still recurring *canaille* choruses, of which the facile rhymes seemed mostly made on a prolonged

amu-u-u-r. It is noticeable that Italian ditties are specially designed for fellows shouting in the streets at night. They seem in keeping there, and nowhere else that I could ever see. And these Davosers took to them naturally when the time for Comus came. It was between four and five in the morning, and nearly all the houses in the place were dark. The tall church-tower and spire loomed up above us in grey twilight. The tireless wind still swept thin snow from fell and forest. But the frenzied bells had sunk into their twelvemonth's slumber, which shall be broken only by decorous tollings at less festive times. I wondered whether they were tingling still with the heart-throbs and with the pressure of those many arms? Was their old age warmed, as mine was, with that gust of life—the young men who had clung to them like bees to lily-bells, and shaken all their locked-up tone and shrillness into the wild winter air? Alas! how many generations of the young have handled them; and they are still there, frozen in their belfry; and the young grow middle-aged, and old, and die at last; and the bells they grappled in their lust of manhood toll them to their graves, on which the tireless wind will, winter after winter, sprinkle snow from alps and forests which they knew.

'There is a light,' cried Christian, 'up in Anna's window!' 'A light! a light!' the Comus shouted. But how to get at the window, which is pretty high above the ground, and out of reach of the most ardent revellers? We search a neighbouring shed, extract a stable-ladder, and in two seconds Palmy has climbed to the topmost rung, while Christian and Georg hold it firm upon the snow beneath. Then begins a passage from some comic opera of Mozart's or Cimarosa's—an escapade familiar to Spanish or Italian students, which recalls the stage. It is an episode from 'Don Giovanni,' translated to this dark-etched scene of snowy hills, and

Gothic tower, and mullioned windows deep embayed beneath their eaves and icicles. *Deh vieni alla finestra !* sings Palmy-Leporello ; the chorus answers : *Deh vieni ! Perchè non vieni ancora ?* pleads Leporello ; the chorus shouts : *Perchè ? Mio amu-u-u-r*, sighs Leporello ; and Echo cries, *amu-u-u-r !* All the wooing, be it noticed, is conducted in Italian. But the actors murmur to each other in Davoser Deutsch, 'She won't come, Palmy ! It is far too late ; she is gone to bed. Come down ; you'll wake the village with your caterwauling !' But Leporello waves his broad archdeacon's hat, and resumes a flood of flexible Bregaglian. He has a shrewd suspicion that the girl is peeping from behind the window curtain ; and tells us, bending down from the ladder, in a hoarse stage-whisper, that we must have patience ; 'these girls are kittle cattle, who take long to draw : but if your lungs last out, they're sure to show.' And Leporello is right. Faint heart ne'er won fair lady. From the summit of his ladder, by his eloquent Italian tongue, he brings the shy bird down at last. We hear the unbarring of the house door, and a comely maiden, in her Sunday dress, welcomes us politely to her ground-floor sitting-room. The Comus enters, in grave order, with set speeches, handshakes, and inevitable *Prosits !* It is a large low chamber, with a huge stone stove, wide benches fixed along the walls, and a great oval table. We sit how and where we can. Red wine is produced, and eier-brod and küchli. Fräulein Anna serves us sedately, holding her own with decent self-respect against the inrush of the revellers. She is quite alone ; but are not her father and mother in bed above, and within earshot ? Besides, the Comus, even at this abnormal hour and after an abnormal night, is well conducted. Things seem slipping into a decorous wine-party, when Leporello readjusts the broad-brimmed hat upon his head, and very cleverly acts a little love-scene for our benefit.

Fräulein Anna takes this as a delicate compliment, and the thing is so prettily done in truth, that not the sternest taste could be offended. Meanwhile another party of night-wanderers, attracted by our mirth, break in. More *Prosits* and clinked glasses follow; and with a fair good-morning to our hostess, we retire.

It is too late to think of bed. 'The quincunx of heaven,' as Sir Thomas Browne phrased it on a dissimilar occasion, 'runs low. . . . The huntsmen are up in America;' and not in America only, for the huntsmen, if there are any this night in Graubünden, have long been out upon the snow, and the stable-lads are dragging the sledges from their sheds to carry down the mails to Landquart. We meet the porters from the various hotels, bringing letter-bags and luggage to the post. It is time to turn in and take a cup of black coffee against the rising sun.

IX

Some nights, even in Davos, are spent, even by an invalid, in bed. A leaflet, therefore, of 'Sleep-chasings' may not inappropriately be flung, as envoy to so many wanderings on foot and sledge upon the winter snows.

The first is a confused medley of things familiar and things strange. I have been dreaming of far-away old German towns, with gabled houses deep in snow; dreaming of châlets in forgotten Alpine glens, where wood-cutters come plunging into sleepy light from gloom, and sinking down beside the stove to shake the drift from their rough shoulders; dreaming of vast veils of icicles upon the gaunt black rocks in places where no foot of man will pass, and where the snow is weaving eyebrows over the ledges of grey whirlwind-beaten precipices; dreaming of Venice, forlorn beneath the windy drip of rain, the gas lamps flickering on the swimming piazzetta, the

barche idle, the gondolier wrapped in his thread-bare cloak, alone; dreaming of Apennines, with world-old cities, brown, above the brown sea of dead chestnut boughs; dreaming of stormy tides, and watchers aloft in lighthouses when day is finished; dreaming of dead men and women and dead children in the earth, far down beneath the snow-drifts, six feet deep. And then I lift my face, awaking, from my pillow; the pallid moon is on the valley, and the room is filled with spectral light.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. This is a hospice in an unfrequented pass, between sad peaks, beside a little black lake, overdrifted with soft snow. I pass into the house-room, gliding silently. An old man and an old woman are nodding, bowed in deepest slumber, by the stove. A young man plays the zither on a table. He lifts his head, still modulating with his fingers on the strings. He looks right through me with wide anxious eyes. He does not see me, but sees Italy, I know, and some one wandering on a sandy shore.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. This is S. Stephen's Church in Wien. Inside, the lamps are burning dimly in the choir. There is fog in the aisles; but through the sleepy air and over the red candles flies a wild soprano's voice, a boy's soul in its singing sent to heaven.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. From the mufflers in which his father, the mountebank, has wrapped the child, to carry him across the heath, a little tumbling-boy emerges in soiled tights. He is half asleep. His father scrapes the fiddle. The boy shortens his red belt, kisses his fingers to us, and ties himself into a knot among the glasses on the table.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. I am on the parapet of a huge circular tower, hollow like a well, and pierced with windows at irregular intervals. The parapet is broad, and

slabbed with red Verona marble. Around me are athletic men, all naked, in the strangest attitudes of studied rest, down-gazing, as I do, into the depths below. There comes a confused murmur of voices, and the tower is threaded and rethreaded with great cables. Up these there climb to us a crowd of young men, clinging to the ropes and flinging their bodies sideways on aërial trapezes. My heart trembles with keen joy and terror. For nowhere else could plastic forms be seen more beautiful, and nowhere else is peril more apparent. Leaning my chin upon the utmost verge, I wait. I watch one youth, who smiles and soars to me; and when his face is almost touching mine, he speaks, but what he says I know not.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. The whole world rocks to its foundations. The mountain summits that I know are shaken. They bow their bristling crests. They are falling, falling on us, and the earth is riven. I wake in terror, shouting: INSOLITIS TREMUERUNT MOTIBUS ALPES! An earthquake, slight but real, has stirred the ever-wakeful Vesta of the brain to this Virgilian quotation.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. Once more at night I sledge alone upon the Klosters road. It is the point where the woods close over it and moonlight may not pierce the boughs. There come shrill cries of many voices from behind, and rushings that pass by and vanish. Then on their sledges I behold the phantoms of the dead who died in Davos, longing for their homes; and each flies past me, shrieking in the still cold air; and phosphorescent like long meteors, the pageant turns the windings of the road below and disappears.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. This is the top of some high mountain, where the crags are cruelly tortured and cast in enormous splinters on the ledges of cliffs grey with old-world ice. A ravine, opening at my feet, plunges

down immeasurably to a dim and distant sea. Above me soars a precipice embossed with a gigantic ice-bound shape. As I gaze thereon, I find the lineaments and limbs of a Titanic man chained and nailed to the rock. His beard has grown for centuries, and flowed this way and that, adown his breast and over to the stone on either side; and the whole of him is covered with a greenish ice, ancient beyond the memory of man. 'This is Prometheus,' I whisper to myself, 'and I am alone on Caucasus.'

BACCHUS IN GRAUBÜNDEN

I

Some years' residence in the Canton of the Grisons made me familiar with all sorts of Valtelline wine; with masculine but rough *Inferno*, generous *Forzato*, delicate *Sassella*, harsher *Montagner*, the raspberry flavour of *Grumello*, the sharp invigorating twang of *Villa*. The colour, ranging from garnet to almandine or ruby, told me the age and quality of wine; and I could judge from the crust it forms upon the bottle, whether it had been left long enough in wood to ripen. I had furthermore arrived at the conclusion that the best Valtelline can only be tasted in cellars of the Engadine or Davos, where this vintage matures slowly in the mountain air, and takes a flavour unknown at lower levels. In a word, it had amused my leisure to make or think myself a connoisseur. My literary taste was tickled by the praise bestowed in the Augustan age on Rhætic grapes by Virgil:

> Et quo te carmine dicam,
> Rhætica? nec cellis ideo contende Falernis.

I piqued myself on thinking that could the poet but have drank one bottle at Samaden—where Stilicho, by the way, in his famous recruiting expedition may perhaps have drank it—he would have been less chary in his panegyric. For the point of inferiority on which he seems to insist, namely, that Valtelline wine does not keep well in cellar, is only proper to this vintage in Italian climate.

Such meditations led my fancy on the path of history. Is there truth, then, in the dim tradition that this mountain land was colonised by Etruscans? Is *Ras* the root of Rhætia? The Etruscans were accomplished wine-growers, we know. It was their Montepulciano which drew the Gauls to Rome, if Livy can be trusted. Perhaps they first planted the vine in Valtelline. Perhaps its superior culture in that district may be due to ancient use surviving in a secluded Alpine valley. One thing is certain, that the peasants of Sondrio and Tirano understand viticulture better than the Italians of Lombardy.

Then my thoughts ran on to the period of modern history, when the Grisons seized the Valtelline in lieu of war-pay from the Dukes of Milan. For some three centuries they held it as a subject province. From the Rathhaus at Davos or Chur they sent their nobles—Von Salis and Buol, Planta and Sprecher von Bernegg—across the hills as governors or podestàs to Poschiavo, Sondrio, Tirano, and Morbegno. In those old days the Valtelline wines came duly every winter over snow-deep passes to fill the cellars of the Signori Grigioni. That quaint traveller Tom Coryat, in his so-called 'Crudities,' notes the custom early in the seventeenth century. And as that custom then obtained, it still subsists with little alteration. The wine-carriers—Weinführer, as they are called—first scaled the Bernina pass, halting then as now, perhaps, at Poschiavo and Pontresina. Afterwards, in order to reach Davos, the pass of the Scaletta rose before them—a wilderness of untracked snow-drifts. The country-folk still point to narrow, light hand-sledges, on which the casks were charged before the last pitch of the pass. Some wine came, no doubt, on pack-saddles. A meadow in front of the Dischma-Thal, where the pass ends, still bears the name of the Ross-Weid, or horse-pasture. It was here that the beasts

of burden used for this wine-service, rested after their long labours. In favourable weather the whole journey from Tirano would have occupied at least four days, with scanty halts at night.

The Valtelline slipped from the hands of the Grisons early in this century. It is rumoured that one of the Von Salis family negotiated matters with Napoleon more for his private benefit than for the interests of the state. However this may have been, when the Graubünden became a Swiss Canton, after four centuries of sovereign independence, the whole Valtelline passed to Austria, and so eventually to Italy. According to modern and just notions of nationality, this was right. In their period of power, the Grisons masters had treated their Italian dependencies with harshness. The Valtelline is an Italian valley, connected with the rest of the peninsula by ties of race and language. It is, moreover, geographically linked to Italy by the great stream of the Adda, which takes its rise upon the Stelvio, and after passing through the Lake of Como, swells the volume of the Po.

But, though politically severed from the Valtelline, the Engadiners and Davosers have not dropped their old habit of importing its best produce. What they formerly levied as masters, they now acquire by purchase. The Italian revenue derives a large profit from the frontier dues paid at the gate between Tirano and Poschiavo on the Bernina road. Much of the same wine enters Switzerland by another route, travelling from Sondrio to Chiavenna and across the Splügen. But until quite recently, the wine itself could scarcely be found outside the Canton. It was indeed quoted upon Lombard wine-lists. Yet no one drank it; and when I tasted it at Milan, I found it quite unrecognisable. The fact seems to be that the Graubündeners alone know how to

deal with it; and, as I have hinted, the wine requires a mountain climate for its full development.

II

The district where the wine of Valtellina is grown extends, roughly speaking, from Tirano to Morbegno, a distance of some fifty-four miles. The best sorts come from the middle of this region. High up in the valley, soil and climate are alike less favourable. Low down a coarser, earthier quality springs from fat land where the valley broadens. The northern hillsides to a very considerable height above the river are covered with vineyards. The southern slopes on the left bank of the Adda, lying more in shade, yield but little. Inferno, Grumello, and Perla di Sassella are the names of famous vineyards. Sassella is the general name for a large tract. Buying an Inferno, Grumello, or Perla di Sassella wine, it would be absurd to suppose that one obtained it precisely from the eponymous estate. But as each of these vineyards yields a marked quality of wine, which is taken as standard-giving, the produce of the whole district may be broadly classified as approaching more or less nearly to one of these accepted types. The Inferno, Grumello, and Perla di Sassella of commerce are therefore three sorts of good Valtelline, ticketed with famous names to indicate certain differences of quality. Montagner, as the name implies, is a somewhat lighter wine, grown higher up in the hill-vineyards. And of this class there are many species, some approximating to Sassella in delicacy of flavour, others approaching the tart lightness of the Villa vintage. This last takes its title from a village in the neighbourhood of Tirano, where a table-wine is chiefly grown.

Forzato is the strongest, dearest, longest-lived of this

whole family of wines. It is manufactured chiefly at Tirano; and, as will be understood from its name, does not profess to belong to any one of the famous localities. Forzato or Sforzato, forced or enforced, is in fact a wine which has undergone a more artificial process. In German the people call it Strohwein, which also points to the method of its preparation. The finest grapes are selected and dried in the sun (hence the *Stroh*) for a period of eight or nine weeks. When they have almost become raisins, they are pressed. The must is heavily charged with sugar, and ferments powerfully. Wine thus made requires several years to ripen. Sweet at first, it takes at last a very fine quality and flavour, and is rough, almost acid, on the tongue. Its colour too turns from a deep rich crimson to the tone of tawny port, which indeed it much resembles.

Old Forzato, which has been long in cask, and then perhaps three years in bottle, will fetch at least six francs, or may rise to even ten francs a flask. The best Sassella rarely reaches more than five francs. Good Montagner and Grumello can be had perhaps for four francs; and Inferno of a special quality for six francs. Thus the average price of old Valtelline wine may be taken as five francs a bottle. These, I should observe, are hotel prices.

Valtelline wines bought in the wood vary, of course, according to their age and year of vintage. I have found that from 2.50 fr. to 3.50 fr. per litre is a fair price for sorts fit to bottle. The new wine of 1881 sold in the following winter at prices varying from 1.05 fr. to 1.80 fr. per litre.

It is customary for the Graubünden wine-merchants to buy up the whole produce of a vineyard from the peasants at the end of the vintage. They go in person or depute their agents to inspect the wine, make their bargains, and seal the cellars where the wine is stored. Then, when the snow has

fallen, their own horses with sleighs and trusted servants go across the passes to bring it home. Generally they have some local man of confidence at Tirano, the starting-point for the homeward journey, who takes the casks up to that place and sees them duly charged. Merchants of old standing maintain relations with the same peasants, taking their wine regularly; so that from Lorenz Gredig at Pontresína or Andreas Gredig at Davos Dörfli, from Fanconi at Samaden, or from Giacomi at Chiavenna, special qualities of wine, the produce of certain vineyards, are to be obtained. Up to the present time this wine trade has been conducted with simplicity and honesty by both the dealers and the growers. One chief merit of Valtelline wine is that it is pure. How long so desirable a state of things will survive the slow but steady development of an export business may be questioned.

III

With so much practical and theoretical interest in the produce of the Valtelline to stimulate my curiosity, I determined to visit the district at the season when the wine was leaving it. It was the winter of 1881–82, a winter of unparalleled beauty in the high Alps. Day succeeded day without a cloud. Night followed night with steady stars, gliding across clear mountain ranges and forests of dark pines unstirred by wind. I could not hope for a more prosperous season; and indeed I made such use of it, that between the months of January and March I crossed six passes of the Alps in open sleighs—the Fluela Bernina, Splügen, Julier, Maloja, and Albula—with less difficulty and discomfort in mid-winter than the traveller may often find on them in June.

At the end of January, my friend Christian and I left Davos long before the sun was up, and ascended for four

hours through the interminable snow-drifts of the Fluela in a cold grey shadow. The sun's light seemed to elude us. It ran along the ravine through which we toiled; dipped down to touch the topmost pines above our heads; rested in golden calm upon the Schiahorn at our back; capriciously played here and there across the Weisshorn on our left, and made the precipices of the Schwartzhorn glitter on our right. But athwart our path it never fell until we reached the very summit of the pass. Then we passed quietly into the full glory of the winter morning—a tranquil flood of sunbeams, pouring through air of crystalline purity, frozen and motionless. White peaks and dark brown rocks soared up, cutting a sky of almost purple blueness. A stillness that might be felt brooded over the whole world; but in that stillness there was nothing sad, no suggestion of suspended vitality. It was the stillness rather of untroubled health, of strength omnipotent but unexerted.

From the Hochspitz of the Fluela the track plunges at one bound into the valley of the Inn, following a narrow cornice carved from the smooth bank of snow, and hung, without break or barrier, a thousand feet or more above the torrent. The summer road is lost in snow-drifts. The galleries built as a protection from avalanches, which sweep in rivers from those grim, bare fells above, are blocked with snow. Their useless arches yawn, as we glide over or outside them, by paths which instinct in our horse and driver traces. As a fly may creep along a house-roof, slanting downwards we descend. One whisk from the swinged tail of an avalanche would hurl us, like a fly, into the ruin of the gaping gorge. But this season little snow has fallen on the higher hills; and what still lies there, is hard frozen. Therefore we have no fear, as we whirl fast and faster from the snow-fields into the black forests of gnarled cembras and wind-wearied pines. Then

Süss is reached, where the Inn hurries its shallow waters clogged with ice-floes through a sleepy hamlet. The stream is pure and green; for the fountains of the glaciers are locked by winter frosts; and only clear rills from perennial sources swell its tide. At Süss we lost the sun, and toiled in garish gloom and silence, nipped by the ever-deepening cold of evening, upwards for four hours to Samaden.

The next day was spent in visiting the winter colony at San Moritz, where the Kulm Hotel, tenanted by some twenty guests, presented in its vastness the appearance of a country-house. One of the prettiest spots in the world is the ice-rink, fashioned by the skill of Herr Caspar Badrutt on a high raised terrace, commanding the valley of the Inn and the ponderous bulwarks of Bernina. The silhouettes of skaters, defined against that landscape of pure white, passed to and fro beneath a cloudless sky. Ladies sat and worked or read on seats upon the ice. Not a breath of wind was astir, and warm beneficent sunlight flooded the immeasurable air. Only, as the day declined, some iridescent films overspread the west; and just above Maloja the apparition of a mock sun—a well-defined circle of opaline light, broken at regular intervals by four globes—seemed to portend a change of weather. This forecast fortunately proved delusive. We drove back to Samaden across the silent snow, enjoying those delicate tints of rose and violet and saffron which shed enchantment for one hour over the white monotony of Alpine winter.

At half-past eight next morning, the sun was rising from behind Pitz Languard, as we crossed the Inn and drove through Pontresina in the glorious light, with all its huge hotels quite empty and none but a few country-folk abroad. Those who only know the Engadine in summer have little conception of its beauty. Winter softens the hard details of bare rock, and rounds the melancholy grassless mountain

flanks, suspending icicles to every ledge and spangling the curved surfaces of snow with crystals. The landscape gains in purity, and, what sounds unbelievable, in tenderness. Nor does it lose in grandeur. Looking up the valley of the Morteratsch that morning, the glaciers were distinguishable in hues of green and sapphire through their veil of snow; and the highest peaks soared in a transparency of amethystine light beneath a blue sky traced with filaments of windy cloud. Some storm must have disturbed the atmosphere in Italy, for fan-shaped mists frothed out around the sun, and curled themselves above the mountains in fine feathery wreaths, melting imperceptibly into air, until, when we had risen above the cembras, the sky was one deep solid blue.

All that upland wilderness is lovelier now than in the summer; and on the morning of which I write, the air itself was far more summery than I have ever known it in the Engadine in August. We could scarcely bear to place our hands upon the woodwork of the sleigh because of the fierce sun's heat. And yet the atmosphere was crystalline with windless frost. As though to increase the strangeness of these contrasts, the pavement of beaten snow was stained with red drops spilt from wine-casks which pass over it.

The chief feature of the Bernina—what makes it a dreary pass enough in summer, but infinitely beautiful in winter—is its breadth; illimitable undulations of snow-drifts; immensity of open sky; unbroken lines of white, descending in smooth curves from glittering ice-peaks.

A glacier hangs in air above the frozen lakes, with all its green-blue ice-cliffs glistening in intensest light. Pitz Palu shoots aloft like sculptured marble, delicately veined with soft aërial shadows of translucent blue. At the summit of the pass all Italy seems to burst upon the eyes in those steep serried ranges, with their craggy crests, violet-hued in noon-

day sunshine, as though a bloom of plum or grape had been shed over them, enamelling their jagged precipices.

The top of the Bernina is not always thus in winter. It has a bad reputation for the fury of invading storms, when falling snow hurtles together with snow scooped from the drifts in eddies, and the weltering white sea shifts at the will of whirlwinds. The Hospice then may be tenanted for days together by weather-bound wayfarers; and a line drawn close beneath its roof shows how two years ago the whole building was buried in one snow-shroud. This morning we lounged about the door, while our horses rested and postillions and carters pledged one another in cups of new Veltliner.

The road takes an awful and sudden dive downwards, quite irrespective of the carefully engineered post-track. At this season the path is badly broken into ruts and chasms by the wine traffic. In some places it was indubitably perilous: a narrow ledge of mere ice skirting thinly clad hard-frozen banks of snow, which fell precipitately sideways for hundreds of sheer feet. We did not slip over this parapet, though we were often within an inch of doing so. Had our horse stumbled, it is not probable that I should have been writing this.

When we came to the galleries which defend the road from avalanches, we saw ahead of us a train of over forty sledges ascending, all charged with Valtelline wine. Our postillions drew up at the inner side of the gallery, between massive columns of the purest ice dependent from the rough-hewn roof and walls of rock. A sort of open *loggia* on the farther side framed vignettes of the Valtelline mountains in their hard cerulean shadows and keen sunlight. Between us and the view defiled the wine-sledges; and as each went by, the men made us drink out of their *trinketti*. These are oblong, hexagonal wooden kegs, holding about fourteen litres,

which the carter fills with wine before he leaves the Valtelline, to cheer him on the homeward journey. You raise it in both hands, and when the bung has been removed, allow the liquor to flow stream-wise down your throat. It was a most extraordinary Bacchic procession—a pomp which, though undreamed of on the banks of the Ilissus, proclaimed the deity of Dionysos in authentic fashion. Struggling horses, grappling at the ice-bound floor with sharp-spiked shoes; huge, hoarse drivers, some clad in sheepskins from Italian valleys, some brown as bears in rough Graubünden homespun; casks, dropping their spilth of red wine on the snow; greetings, embracings; patois of Bergamo, Romansch, and German roaring around the low-browed vaults and tingling ice pillars; pourings forth of libations of the new strong Valtelline on breasts and beards;—the whole made up a scene of stalwart jollity and manful labour such as I have nowhere else in such wild circumstances witnessed. Many Davosers were there, the men of Andreas Gredig, Valär, and so forth; and all of these, on greeting Christian, forced us to drain a *Schluck* from their unmanageable cruses. Then on they went, crying, creaking, struggling, straining through the corridor, which echoed deafeningly, the gleaming crystals of those hard Italian mountains in their winter raiment building a background of still beauty to the savage Bacchanalian riot of the team.

How little the visitors who drink Valtelline wine at S. Moritz or Davos reflect by what strange ways it reaches them. A sledge can scarcely be laden with more than one cask of 300 litres on the ascent; and this cask, according to the state of the road, has many times to be shifted from wheels to runners and back again before the journey is accomplished. One carter will take charge of two horses, and consequently of two sledges and two casks, driving them both by voice and gesture rather than by rein. When they leave the Valtelline,

the carters endeavour, as far as possible, to take the pass in gangs, lest bad weather or an accident upon the road should overtake them singly. At night they hardly rest three hours, and rarely think of sleeping, but spend the time in drinking and conversation. The horses are fed and littered; but for them too the night-halt is little better than a baiting-time. In fair weather the passage of the mountain is not difficult, though tiring. But woe to men and beasts alike if they encounter storms! Not a few perish in the passes; and it frequently happens that their only chance is to unyoke the horses and leave the sledges in a snow-wreath, seeking for themselves such shelter as may possibly be gained, frost-bitten, after hours of battling with impermeable drifts. The wine is frozen into one solid mass of rosy ice before it reaches Pontresina. This does not hurt the young vintage, but it is highly injurious to wine of some years' standing. The perils of the journey are aggravated by the savage temper of the drivers. Jealousies between the natives of rival districts spring up; and there are men alive who have fought the whole way down from Fluela Hospice to Davos Platz with knives and stones, hammers and hatchets, wooden staves and splintered cart-wheels, staining the snow with blood, and bringing broken pates, bruised limbs, and senseless comrades home to their women to be tended.

Bacchus Alpinus shepherded his train away from us to northward, and we passed forth into noonday from the gallery. It then seemed clear that both conductor and postillion were sufficiently merry. The plunge they took us down those frozen parapets, with shriek and *jauchzen* and cracked whips, was more than ever dangerous. Yet we reached La Rosa safely. This is a lovely solitary spot, beside a rushing stream, among grey granite boulders grown with spruce and rhododendron: a veritable rose of Sharon

blooming in the desert. The wastes of the Bernina stretch above, and round about are leaguered some of the most forbidding sharp-toothed peaks I ever saw. Onwards, across the silent snow, we glided in immitigable sunshine, through opening valleys and pine-woods, past the robber-huts of Pisciadella, until at evenfall we rested in the roadside inn at Poschiavo.

IV

The snow-path ended at Poschiavo; and when, as usual, we started on our journey next day at sunrise, it was in a carriage upon wheels. Yet even here we were in full mid-winter. Beyond Le Prese the lake presented one sheet of smooth black ice, reflecting every peak and chasm of the mountains, and showing the rocks and water-weeds in the clear green depths below. The glittering floor stretched away for acres of untenanted expanse, with not a skater to explore those dark mysterious coves, or strike across the slanting sunlight poured from clefts in the impendent hills. Inshore the substance of the ice sparkled here and there with iridescence like the plumelets of a butterfly's wing under the microscope, wherever light happened to catch the jagged or oblique flaws that veined its solid crystal.

From the lake the road descends suddenly for a considerable distance through a narrow gorge, following a torrent which rushes among granite boulders. Chestnut trees begin to replace the pines. The sunnier terraces are planted with tobacco, and at a lower level vines appear at intervals in patches. One comes at length to a great red gate across the road, which separates Switzerland from Italy, and where the export dues on wine are paid. The Italian custom-house is romantically perched above the torrent. Two courteous and elegant *finanzieri*, mere boys, were sitting wrapped in

their military cloaks and reading novels in the sun as we drove up. Though they made some pretence of examining the luggage, they excused themselves with sweet smiles and apologetic eyes—it was a disagreeable duty!

A short time brought us to the first village in the Valtelline, where the road bifurcates northward to Bormio and the Stelvio pass, southward to Sondrio and Lombardy. It is a little hamlet, known by the name of La Madonna di Tirano, having grown up round a pilgrimage church of great beauty, with tall Lombard bell-tower, pierced with many tiers of pilastered windows, ending in a whimsical spire, and dominating a fantastic cupola building of the earlier Renaissance. Taken altogether, this is a charming bit of architecture, picturesquely set beneath the granite snow-peaks of the Valtelline. The church, they say, was raised at Madonna's own command to stay the tide of heresy descending from the Engadine; and in the year 1620, the bronze statue of S. Michael, which still spreads wide its wings above the cupola, looked down upon the massacre of six hundred Protestants and foreigners, commanded by the patriot Jacopo Robustelli.

From Madonna the road leads up the valley through a narrow avenue of poplar-trees to the town of Tirano. We were now in the district where Forzato is made, and every vineyard had a name and history. In Tirano we betook ourself to the house of an old acquaintance of the Buol family, Bernardo da Campo, or, as the Graubündeners call him, Bernard Campbèll. We found him at dinner with his son and grandchildren in a vast, dark, bare Italian chamber. It would be difficult to find a more typical old Scotchman of the Lowlands than he looked, with his clean close-shaven face, bright brown eyes, and snow-white hair escaping from a broad-brimmed hat. He might have sat to a painter for

some Covenanter's portrait, except that there was nothing dour about him, or for an illustration to Burns's 'Cotter's Saturday Night.' The air of probity and canniness combined with a twinkle of dry humour was completely Scotch; and when he tapped his snuff-box, telling stories of old days, I could not refrain from asking him about his pedigree. It should be said that there is a considerable family of Campèlls or Campbèlls in the Graubünden, who are fabled to deduce their stock from a Scotch Protestant of Zwingli's time; and this made it irresistible to imagine that in our friend Bernardo I had chanced upon a notable specimen of atavism. All he knew, however, was, that his first ancestor had been a foreigner, who came across the mountains to Tirano two centuries ago.[1]

This old gentleman is a considerable wine-dealer. He sent us with his son, Giacomo, on a long journey underground through his cellars, where we tasted several sorts of Valtelline, especially the new Forzato, made a few weeks since, which singularly combines sweetness with strength, and both with a slight effervescence. It is certainly the sort of wine wherewith to tempt a Polyphemus, and not unapt to turn a giant's head.

Leaving Tirano, and once more passing through the poplars by Madonna, we descended the valley all along the vineyards of Villa and the vast district of Sassella. Here and there, at wayside inns, we stopped to drink a glass of some particular vintage; and everywhere it seemed as though god Bacchus were at home. The whole valley on the right side of the Adda is one gigantic vineyard, climbing the hills in tiers

[1] The Grisons surname Campèll may derive from the Romansch Campo Bello. The founder of the house was one Kaspar Campèll, who in the first half of the sixteenth century preached the Reformed religion in the Engadine.

and terraces, which justify its Italian epithet of *Teatro di Bacco*. The rock is a greyish granite, assuming sullen brown and orange tints where exposed to sun and weather. The vines are grown on stakes, not trellised over trees or carried across boulders, as is the fashion at Chiavenna or Terlan. Yet every advantage of the mountain is adroitly used; nooks and crannies being specially preferred, where the sun's rays are deflected from hanging cliffs. The soil seems deep, and is of a dull yellow tone. When the vines end, brushwood takes up the growth, which expires at last in crag and snow. Some alps and chalets, dimly traced against the sky, are evidences that a pastoral life prevails above the vineyards. Pan there stretches the pine-thyrsus down to vine-garlanded Dionysos.

The Adda flows majestically among willows in the midst, and the valley is nearly straight. The prettiest spot, perhaps, is at Tresenda or S. Giacomo, where a pass from Edolo and Brescia descends from the southern hills. But the Valtelline has no great claim to beauty of scenery. Its chief town, Sondrio, where we supped and drank some special wine called *il vino de' Signori Grigioni*, has been modernised in dull Italian fashion.

V

The hotel at Sondrio, La Maddalena, was in carnival uproar of masquers, topers, and musicians all night through. It was as much as we could do to rouse the sleepy servants and get a cup of coffee ere we started in the frozen dawn. 'Verfluchte Maddalena!' grumbled Christian as he shouldered our portmanteaus and bore them in hot haste to the post. Long experience only confirms the first impression, that, of all cold, the cold of an Italian winter is most penetrating. As we lumbered out of Sondrio in a heavy diligence, I could

have fancied myself back once again at Radicofani or among the Ciminian hills. The frost was penetrating. Fur-coats would not keep it out; and we longed to be once more in open sledges on Bernina rather than enclosed in that cold coupé. Now we passed Grumello, the second largest of the renowned vine districts; and always keeping the white mass of Monte di Disgrazia in sight, rolled at last into Morbegno. Here the Valtelline vintage properly ends, though much of the ordinary wine is probably supplied from the inferior produce of these fields. It was past noon when we reached Colico, and saw the Lake of Como glittering in sunlight, dazzling cloaks of snow on all the mountains, which look as dry and brown as dead beech-leaves at this season. Our Bacchic journey had reached its close; and it boots not here to tell in detail how we made our way across the Splügen, piercing its avalanches by low-arched galleries scooped from the solid snow, and careering in our sledges down perpendicular snow-fields, which no one who has crossed that pass from the Italian side in winter will forget. We left the refuge station at the top together with a train of wine-sledges, and passed them in the midst of the wild descent. Looking back, I saw two of their horses stumble in the plunge and roll headlong over. Unluckily in one of these somersaults a man was injured. Flung ahead into the snow by the first lurch, the sledge and wine-cask crossed him like a garden-roller. Had his bed not been of snow, he must have been crushed to death; and as it was, he presented a woeful appearance when he afterwards arrived at Splügen.

VI

Though not strictly connected with the subject of this paper, I shall conclude these notes of winter wanderings in

the high Alps with an episode which illustrates their curious vicissitudes.

It was late in the month of March, and nearly all the mountain roads were open for wheeled vehicles. A carriage and four horses came to meet us at the termination of a railway journey in Ragatz. We spent one day in visiting old houses of the Grisons aristocracy at Mayenfeld and Zizers, rejoicing in the early sunshine, which had spread the fields with spring flowers—primroses and oxlips, violets, anemones, and bright blue squills. At Chur we slept, and early next morning started for our homeward drive to Davos. Bad weather had declared itself in the night. It blew violently, and the rain soon changed to snow, frozen by a bitter north blast. Crossing the dreary heath of Lenz was both magnificent and dreadful. By the time we reached Wiesen, all the forests were laden with snow, the roads deep in snow-drifts, the whole scene wintrier than it had been the winter through.

At Wiesen we should have stayed, for evening was fast setting in. But in ordinary weather it is only a two hours drive from Wiesen to Davos. Our coachman made no objections to resuming the journey, and our four horses had but a light load to drag. So we telegraphed for supper to be prepared, and started between five and six.

A deep gorge has to be traversed, where the torrent cleaves its way between jaws of limestone precipices. The road is carried along ledges and through tunnels in the rock. Avalanches, which sweep this passage annually from the hills above, give it the name of Züge, or the Snow-Paths. As we entered the gorge darkness fell, the horses dragged more heavily, and it soon became evident that our Tyrolese driver was hopelessly drunk. He nearly upset us twice by taking sharp turns in the road, banged the carriage against telegraph

posts and jutting rocks, shaved the very verge of the torrent in places where there was no parapet, and, what was worst of all, refused to leave his box without a fight. The darkness by this time was all but total, and a blinding snow-storm swept howling through the ravine. At length we got the carriage to a dead-stop, and floundered out in deep wet snow toward some wooden huts where miners in old days made their habitation. The place, by a curious, perhaps unconscious irony, is called Hoffnungsau, or the Meadow of Hope. Indeed, it is not ill named; for many wanderers, escaping, as we did, from the dreadful gorge of Avalanches on a stormy night, may have felt, as we now felt, their hope reviving when they reached this shelter.

There was no light; nothing above, beneath, around, on any side, but tearing tempest and snow whirled through the ravine. The horses were taken out of the carriage; on their way to the stable, which fortunately in these mountain regions will be always found beside the poorest habitation, one of them fell back across a wall and nearly broke his spine. Hoffnungsau is inhabited all through the year. In its dismal dark kitchen we found a knot of workmen gathered together, and heard there were two horses on the premises besides our own. It then occurred to us that we might accomplish the rest of the journey with such sledges as they bring the wood on from the hills in winter, if coal-boxes or boxes of any sort could be provided. These should be lashed to the sledges and filled with hay. We were only four persons; my wife and a friend should go in one, myself and my little girl in the other. No sooner thought of than put into practice. These original conveyances were improvised, and after two hours' halt on the Meadow of Hope, we all set forth again at half-past eight.

I have rarely felt anything more piercing than the grim

cold of that journey. We crawled at a foot's pace through changeful snow-drifts. The road was obliterated, and it was my duty to keep a petroleum stable-lamp swinging to illuminate the untracked wilderness. My little girl was snugly nested in the hay, and sound asleep with a deep white covering of snow above her. Meanwhile, the drift clave in frozen masses to our faces, lashed by a wind so fierce and keen that it was difficult to breathe it. My forehead-bone ached, as though with neuralgia, from the mere mask of icy snow upon it, plastered on with frost. Nothing could be seen but millions of white specks, whirled at us in eddying concentric circles. Not far from the entrance to the village we met our housefolk out with lanterns to look for us. It was past eleven at night when at last we entered warm rooms and refreshed ourselves for the tiring day with a jovial champagne supper. Horses, carriage, and drunken driver reached home next morning.

OLD TOWNS OF PROVENCE

Travellers journeying southward from Paris first meet with olive-trees near Montdragon or Montélimart—little towns, with old historic names, upon the road to Orange. It is here that we begin to feel ourselves within the land of Provence, where the Romans found a second Italy, and where the autumn of their antique civilisation was followed, almost without an intermediate winter of barbarism, by the light and delicate springtime of romance. Orange itself is full of Rome. Indeed, the ghost of the dead empire seems there to be more real and living than the actual flesh and blood of modern time, as represented by narrow dirty streets and mean churches. It is the shell of the huge theatre, hollowed from the solid hill, and fronted with a wall that seems made rather to protect a city than to form a sounding-board for a stage, which first tells us that we have reached the old Arausio. Of all theatres this is the most impressive, stupendous, indestructible, the Colosseum hardly excepted; for in Rome herself we are prepared for something gigantic, while in the insignificant Arausio—a sort of antique Tewkesbury—to find such magnificence, durability, and vastness, impresses one with a nightmare sense that the old lioness of Empire can scarcely yet be dead. Standing before the colossal, towering, amorphous precipice which formed the background of the scena, we feel as if once more the 'heart-shaking sound of Consul Romanus' might be heard; as if Roman knights and deputies, arisen

from the dead, with faces hard and stern as those of the warriors carved on Trajan's frieze, might take their seats beneath us in the orchestra, and, after proclamation made, the mortmain of imperial Rome be laid upon the comforts, liberties, and little gracefulnesses of our modern life. Nor is it unpleasant to be startled from such reverie by the voice of the old guardian upon the stage beneath, sonorously devolving the vacuous Alexandrines with which he once welcomed his ephemeral French emperor from Algiers. The little man is dim with distance, eclipsed and swallowed up by the shadows and grotesque fragments of the ruin in the midst of which he stands. But his voice—thanks to the inimitable constructive art of the ancient architect, which, even in the desolation of at least thirteen centuries, has not lost its cunning—emerges from the pigmy throat, and fills the whole vast hollow with its clear, if tiny, sound. Thank heaven, there is no danger of Roman resurrection here! The illusion is completely broken, and we turn to gather the first violets of February, and to wonder at the quaint postures of a praying mantis on the grass-grown tiers and porches fringed with fern.

The sense of Roman greatness which is so oppressive in Orange and in many other parts of Provence, is not felt at Avignon. Here we exchange the ghost of Imperial for the phantom of Ecclesiastical Rome. The fixed epithet of Avignon is Papal; and as the express train rushes over its bleak and wind-tormented plain, the heavy dungeon-walls and battlemented towers of its palace fortress seem to warn us off, and bid us quickly leave the Babylon of exiled impious Antichrist. Avignon presents the bleakest, barest, greyest scene upon a February morning, when the incessant *mistral* is blowing, and far and near, upon desolate hillside and sandy plain, the scanty trees are bent sideways, the crumbling castle turrets shivering like bleached skeletons in the dry ungenial air. Yet

inside the town, all is not so dreary. The Papal palace, with its terrible Glacière, its chapel painted by Simone Memmi, its endless corridors and staircases, its torture-chamber, funnel-shaped to drown and suffocate—so runs tradition—the shrieks of wretches on the rack, is now a barrack, filled with lively little French soldiers, whose politeness, though sorely taxed, is never ruffled by the introduction of inquisitive visitors into their dormitories, eating-places, and drill-grounds. And strange, indeed, it is to see the lines of neat narrow barrack beds, between which the red-legged little men are shaving, polishing their guns, or mending their trousers, in those vaulted halls of popes and cardinals, those vast presence-chambers and audience-galleries, where Urban entertained S. Catherine, where Rienzi came, a prisoner, to be stared at. Pass by the Glacière with a shudder, for it has still the reek of blood about it; and do not long delay in the cheerless dungeon of Rienzi. Time and regimental whitewash have swept these lurking-places of old crime very bare; but the parable of the seven devils is true in more senses than one, and the ghosts that return to haunt a deodorised, disinfected, garnished sepulchre are almost more ghastly than those which have never been disturbed from their old habitations.

Little by little the eye becomes accustomed to the bareness and greyness of this Provençal landscape; and then we find that the scenery round Avignon is eminently picturesque. The view from Les Doms—which is a hill above the Pope's palace, the Acropolis, as it were, of Avignon—embraces a wide stretch of undulating champaign, bordered by low hills, and intersected by the flashing waters of the majestic Rhone. Across the stream stands Villeneuve, like a castle of romance, with its round stone towers fronting the gates and battlemented walls of the Papal city. A bridge used to connect the two towns, but it is now broken. The remaining fragment is of

solid build, resting on great buttresses, one of which rises fantastically above the bridge into a little chapel. Such, one might fancy, was the bridge which Ariosto's Rodomonte kept on horse against the Paladins of Charlemagne, when angered by the loss of his love. Nor is it difficult to imagine Bradamante spurring up the slope against him with her magic lance in rest, and tilting him into the tawny waves beneath.

On a clear October morning, when the vineyards are taking their last tints of gold and crimson, and the yellow foliage of the poplars by the river mingles with the sober greys of olive-trees and willows, every square inch of this landscape, glittering as it does with light and with colour, the more beautiful for its subtlety and rarity, would make a picture. Out of many such vignettes let us choose one. We are on the shore close by the ruined bridge, the rolling muddy Rhone in front; beyond it, by the towing-path, a tall strong cypress-tree rises beside a little house, and next to it a crucifix twelve feet or more in height, the Christ visible afar, stretched upon His red cross; arundo donax is waving all around, and willows near; behind, far off, soar the peaked hills, blue and pearled with clouds; past the cypress, on the Rhone, comes floating a long raft, swift through the stream, its rudder guided by a score of men: one standing erect upon the prow bends forward to salute the cross; on flies the raft, the tall reeds rustle, and the cypress sleeps.

For those who have time to spare in going to or from the south it is worth while to spend a day or two in the most comfortable and characteristic of old French inns, the Hôtel de l'Europe, at Avignon. Should it rain, the museum of the town is worth a visit. It contains Horace Vernet's not uncelebrated picture of Mazeppa, and another, less famous, but perhaps more interesting, by swollen-cheeked David, the

'genius in convulsion,' as Carlyle has christened him. His canvas is unfinished. Who knows what cry of the Convention made the painter fling his palette down and leave the masterpiece he might have spoiled? For in its way the picture *is* a masterpiece. There lies Jean Barrad, drummer, aged fourteen, slain in La Vendée, a true patriot, who, while his life-blood flowed away, pressed the tricolor cockade to his heart, and murmured 'Liberty!' David has treated his subject classically. The little drummer-boy, though French enough in feature and in feeling, lies, Greek-like, naked on the sand—a very Hyacinth of the Republic, La Vendée's Ilioneus. The tricolor cockade and the sentiment of upturned patriotic eyes are the only indications of his being a hero in his teens, a citizen who thought it sweet to die for France.

In fine weather a visit to Vaucluse should by no means be omitted, not so much, perhaps, for Petrarch's sake as for the interest of the drive, and for the marvel of the fountain of the Sorgues. For some time after leaving Avignon you jog along the level country between avenues of plane-trees; then comes a hilly ridge, on which the olives, mulberries, and vineyards join their colours and melt subtly into distant purple. After crossing this we reach L'Isle, an island village girdled by the gliding Sorgues, overshadowed with gigantic plane-boughs, and echoing to the plash of water dripped from mossy fern-tufted millwheels. Those who expect Petrarch's Sorgues to be some trickling poet's rill emerging from a damp grotto, may well be astounded at the rush and roar of this azure river so close upon its fountain-head. It has a volume and an arrow-like rapidity that communicate the feeling of exuberance and life. In passing, let it not be forgotten that it was somewhere or other in this 'chiaro fondo di Sorga,' as Carlyle describes, that Jourdain, the hangman-hero of the Glacière, stuck fast upon his pony when flying from his foes,

and had his accursed life, by some diabolical providence, spared for future butcheries. On we go across the austere plain, between fields of madder, the red roots of the 'garance' lying in swathes along the furrows. In front rise ash-grey hills of barren rock, here and there crimsoned with the leaves of the dwarf sumach. A huge cliff stands up and seems to bar all passage. Yet the river foams in torrents at our side. Whence can it issue? What pass or cranny in that precipice is cloven for its escape? These questions grow in interest as we enter the narrow defile of limestone rocks which leads to the cliff-barrier, and find ourselves among the figs and olives of Vaucluse. Here is the village, the little church, the ugly column to Petrarch's memory, the inn, with its caricatures of Laura, and its excellent trout, the bridge and the many-flashing, eddying Sorgues, lashed by millwheels, broken by weirs, divided in its course, channelled and dyked, yet flowing irresistibly and undefiled. Blue, purple, greened by moss and water-weeds, silvered by snow-white pebbles, on its pure smooth bed the river runs like elemental diamond, so clear and fresh. The rocks on either side are grey or yellow, terraced into oliveyards, with here and there a cypress, fig, or mulberry tree. Soon the gardens cease, and lentisk, rosemary, box, and ilex—shrubs of Provence—with here and there a sumach out of reach, cling to the hard stone. And so at last we are brought face to face with the sheer impassable precipice. At its basement sleeps a pool, perfectly untroubled; a lakelet in which the sheltering rocks and nestling wild figs are glassed as in a mirror—a mirror of blue-black water, like amethyst or fluor-spar—so pure, so still, that where it laps the pebbles you can scarcely say where air begins and water ends. This, then, is Petrarch's 'grotto;' this is the fountain of Vaucluse. Up from its deep reservoirs, from the mysterious basements of the mountain, wells the silent stream; pauseless

and motionless it fills its urn, rises unruffled, glides until the brink is reached, then overflows, and foams, and dashes noisily, a cataract, among the boulders of the hills. Nothing at Vaucluse is more impressive than the contrast between the tranquil silence of the fountain and the roar of the released impetuous river. Here we can realise the calm clear eyes of sculptured water-gods, their brimming urns, their gushing streams, the magic of the mountain-born and darkness-cradled flood. Or again, looking up at the sheer steep cliff, 800 feet in height, and arching slightly roofwise, so that no rain falls upon the cavern of the pool, we seem to see the stroke of Neptune's trident, the hoof of Pegasus, the force of Moses' rod, which cleft rocks and made waters gush forth in the desert. There is a strange fascination in the spot. As our eyes follow the white pebble which cleaves the surface and falls visibly, until the veil of azure is too thick for sight to pierce, we feel as if some glamour were drawing us, like Hylas, to the hidden caves. At least, we long to yield a prized and precious offering to the spring, to grace the nymph of Vaucluse with a pearl of price as token of our reverence and love.

Meanwhile nothing has been said about Petrarch, who himself said much about the spring, and complained against these very nymphs to whom we have in wish, at least, been scattering jewels, that they broke his banks and swallowed up his gardens every winter. At Vaucluse Petrarch loved, and lived, and sang. He has made Vaucluse famous, and will never be forgotten there. But for the present the fountain is even more attractive than the memory of the poet.[1]

The change from Avignon to Nismes is very trying to the latter place; for Nismes is not picturesquely or historically

[1] I have translated and printed at the end of the second volume some sonnets of Petrarch as a kind of palinode for this impertinence.

interesting. It is a prosperous modern French town with two almost perfect Roman monuments—Les Arènes and the Maison Carrée. The amphitheatre is a complete oval, visible at one glance. Its smooth white stone, even where it has not been restored, seems unimpaired by age; and Charles Martel's conflagration, when he burned the Saracen hornet's nest inside it, has only blackened the outer walls and arches venerably. Utility and perfect adaptation of means to ends form the beauty of Roman buildings. The science of construction and large intelligence displayed in them, their strength, simplicity, solidity, and purpose, are their glory. Perhaps there is only one modern edifice—Palladio's Palazzo della Ragione at Vicenza—which approaches the dignity and loftiness of Roman architecture; and this it does because of its absolute freedom from ornament, the vastness of its design, and the durability of its material. The temple, called the Maison Carrée, at Nismes, is also very perfect, and comprehended at one glance. Light, graceful, airy, but rather thin and narrow, it reminds one of the temple of Fortuna Virilis at Rome.

But if Nismes itself is not picturesque, its environs contain the wonderful Pont du Gard. A two or three hours' drive leads through a desolate country to the valley of the Gardon, where suddenly, at a turn of the road, one comes upon the aqueduct. It is not within the scope of words to describe the impression produced by those vast arches, row above row, cutting the deep blue sky. The domed summer clouds sailing across them are comprehended in the gigantic span of their perfect semicircles, which seem rather to have been described by Miltonic compasses of Deity than by merely human mathematics. Yet, standing beneath one of the vaults and looking upward, you may read Roman numerals in order from I. to X., which prove their human origin well enough.

Next to their strength, regularity, and magnitude, the most astonishing point about this triple tier of arches, piled one above the other to a height of 180 feet above a brawling stream between two barren hills, is their lightness. The arches are not thick; the causeway on the top is only just broad enough for three men to walk abreast. So smooth and perpendicular are the supporting walls that scarcely a shrub or tuft of grass has grown upon the aqueduct in all these years. And yet the huge fabric is strengthened by no buttress, has needed no repair. This lightness of structure, combined with such prodigious durability, produces the strongest sense of science and self-reliant power in the men who designed it. None but Romans could have built such a monument, and have set it in such a place—a wilderness of rock and rolling hill, scantily covered with low brushwood, and browsed over by a few sheep—for such a purpose, too, in order to supply Nemausus with pure water. The modern town does pretty well without its water; but here subsists the civilisation of eighteen centuries past intact: the human labour yet remains, the measuring, contriving mind of man, shrinking from no obstacles, spanning the air, and in one edifice combining gigantic strength and perfect beauty. It is impossible not to echo Rousseau's words in such a place, and to say with him: 'Le retentissement de mes pas dans ces immenses voûtes me faisait croire entendre la forte voix de ceux qui les avaient bâties. Je me perdais comme un insecte dans cette immensité. Je sentais, tout en me faisant petit, je ne sais quoi qui m'élevait l'âme; et je me disais en soupirant, Que ne suis-je né Romain!'

There is nothing at Arles which produces the same deep and indelible impression. Yet Arles is a far more interesting town than Nismes, partly because of the Rhone delta which begins there, partly because of its ruinous antiquity, and

partly also because of the strong local character of its population. The amphitheatre of Arles is vaster and more sublime in its desolation than the tidy theatre at Nismes; the crypts, and dens, and subterranean passages suggest all manner of speculation as to the uses to which they may have been appropriated; while the broken galleries outside, intricate and black and cavernous, like Piranesi's etchings of the 'Carceri,' present the wildest pictures of greatness in decay, fantastic dilapidation. The ruins of the smaller theatre, again, with their picturesquely grouped fragments and their standing columns, might be sketched for a frontispiece to some dilettante work on classical antiquities. For the rest, perhaps the Aliscamps, or ancient Roman burial-ground, is the most interesting thing at Arles, not only because of Dante's celebrated lines in the canto of 'Farinata:'—

> Si come ad Arli ove 'l Rodano stagna,
> Fanno i sepolcri tutto 'l loco varo;

but also because of the intrinsic picturesqueness of this avenue of sepulchres beneath green trees upon a long soft grassy field.

But as at Avignon and Nismes, so also at Arles, one of the chief attractions of the place lies at a distance, and requires a special expedition. The road to Les Baux crosses a true Provençal desert where one realises the phrase, 'Vieux comme les rochers de Provence,'—a wilderness of grey stone, here and there worn into cart-tracks, and tufted with rosemary, box, lavender, and lentisk. On the way it passes the Abbaye de Mont Majeur, a ruin of gigantic size, embracing all periods of architecture; where nothing seems to flourish now but henbane and the wild cucumber, or to breathe but a mumble-toothed and terrible old hag. The ruin stands above a desolate marsh, its vast Italian buildings of Palladian splendour

looking more forlorn in their decay than the older and austerer mediæval towers, which rise up proud and patient and defiantly erect beneath the curse of time. When at length what used to be the castle town of Les Baux is reached, you find a naked mountain of yellow sandstone, worn away by nature into bastions and buttresses and coigns of vantage, sculptured by ancient art into palaces and chapels, battlements and dungeons. Now art and nature are confounded in one ruin. Blocks of masonry lie cheek by jowl with masses of the rough-hewn rock: fallen cavern vaults are heaped round fragments of fan-shaped spandrel and clustered column-shaft; the doors and windows of old pleasure-rooms are hung with ivy and wild fig for tapestry; winding staircases start midway upon the cliff, and lead to vacancy. High overhead suspended in mid-air hang chambers—lady's bower or poet's singing-room—now inaccessible, the haunt of hawks and swallows. Within this rocky honeycomb—'cette ville en monolithe,' as it has been aptly called, for it is literally scooped out of one mountain block—live about two hundred poor people, foddering their wretched goats at carved piscina and stately sideboards, erecting mud-beplastered hovels in the halls of feudal princes. Murray is wrong in calling the place a mediæval town in its original state, for anything more purely ruinous, more like a decayed old cheese, cannot possibly be conceived. The living only inhabit the tombs of the dead. At the end of the last century, when revolutionary effervescence was beginning to ferment, the people of Arles swept all its feudality away, defacing the very arms upon the town gate, and trampling the palace towers to dust.

The castle looks out across a vast extent of plain over Arles, the stagnant Rhone, the Camargue, and the salt pools of the lingering sea. In old days it was the eyrie of an eagle race called Seigneurs of Les Baux; and whether they took their

title from the rock, or whether, as genealogists would have it, they gave the name of Oriental Balthazar—their reputed ancestor, one of the Magi—to the rock itself, remains a mystery not greatly worth the solving.

Anyhow, here they lived and flourished, these feudal princes, bearing for their ensign a silver comet of sixteen rays upon a field of gules—themselves a comet race, baleful to the neighbouring lowlands, blazing with lurid splendour over wide tracts of country, a burning, raging, fiery-souled, swift-handed tribe, in whom a flame unquenchable glowed from son to sire through twice five hundred years until, in the sixteenth century, they were burned out, and nothing remained but cinders—these broken ruins of their eyrie, and some outworn and dusty titles. Very strange are the fate and history of these same titles: King of Arles, for instance, savouring of troubadour and high romance; Prince of Tarentum, smacking of old plays and Italian novels; Prince of Orange, which the Nassaus, through the Châlons, seized in all its emptiness long after the real principality had passed away, and came therewith to sit on England's throne.

The Les Baux in their heyday were patterns of feudal nobility. They warred incessantly with Counts of Provence, archbishops and burghers of Arles, Queens of Naples, Kings of Aragon. Crusading, pillaging, betraying, spending their substance on the sword, and buying it again by deeds of valour or imperial acts of favour, tuning troubadour harps, presiding at courts of love,—they filled a large page in the history of Southern France. The Les Baux were very superstitious. In the fulness of their prosperity they restricted the number of their dependent towns, or *places baussenques*, to seventy-nine, because these numbers in combination were thought to be of good omen to their house. Beral des Baux, Seigneur of Marseilles, was one day starting on a journey

with his whole force to Avignon. He met an old woman herb-gathering at daybreak, and said, 'Mother, hast thou seen a crow or other bird?' 'Yea,' answered the crone, 'on the trunk of a dead willow.' Beral counted upon his fingers the day of the year, and turned bridle. With troubadours of name and note they had dealings, but not always to their own advantage, as the following story testifies. When the Baux and Berengers were struggling for the countship of Provence, Raymond Berenger, by his wife's counsel, went, attended by troubadours, to meet the Emperor Frederick at Milan. There he sued for the investiture and ratification of Provence. His troubadours sang and charmed Frederick; and the Emperor, for the joy he had in them, wrote his celebrated lines beginning—

Plas mi cavalier Francez.

And when Berenger made his request he met with no refusal. Hearing thereof, the lords of Baux came down in wrath with a clangour of armed men. But music had already gained the day; and where the Phœbus of Provence had shone, the Æolus of storm-shaken Les Baux was powerless. Again, when Blacas, a knight of Provence, died, the great Sordello chanted one of his most fiery hymns, bidding the princes of Christendom flock round and eat the heart of the dead lord. 'Let Rambaude des Baux,' cries the bard, with a sarcasm that is clearly meant, but at this distance almost unintelligible, 'take also a good piece, for she is fair and good and truly virtuous; let her keep it well who knows so well to husband her own weal.' But the poets were not always adverse to the house of Baux. Fouquet, the beautiful and gentle melodist whom Dante placed in paradise, served Adelaisie, wife of Berald, with long service of unhappy love, and wrote upon her death 'The Complaint of Berald des Baux for Adelaisie.' Guillaume de Cabestan loved Berangère des Baux, and was

so loved by her that she gave him a philtre to drink, whereof he sickened and grew mad. Many more troubadours are cited as having frequented the castle of Les Baux, and among the members of the princely house were several poets.

Some of them were renowned for beauty. We hear of a Cécile, called Passe Rose, because of her exceeding loveliness; also of an unhappy François, who, after passing eighteen years in prison, yet won the grace and love of Joan of Naples by his charms. But the real temper of this fierce tribe was not shown among troubadours, or in the courts of love and beauty. The stern and barren rock from which they sprang, and the comet of their scutcheon, are the true symbols of their nature. History records no end of their ravages and slaughters. It is a tedious catalogue of blood—how one prince put to fire and sword the whole town of Courthezon; how another was stabbed in prison by his wife; how a third besieged the castle of his niece, and sought to undermine her chamber, knowing her the while to be in childbed; how a fourth was flayed alive outside the walls of Avignon. There is nothing terrible, splendid, and savage, belonging to feudal history, of which an example may not be found in the annals of Les Baux, as narrated by their chronicler, Jules Canonge.

However abrupt may seem the transition from these memories of the ancient nobles of Les Baux to mere matters of travel and picturesqueness, it would be impossible to take leave of the old towns of Provence without glancing at the cathedrals of S. Trophime at Arles, and of S. Gilles—a village on the border of the dreary flamingo-haunted Camargue. Both of these buildings have porches splendidly encrusted with sculptures, half classical, half mediæval, marking the transition from ancient to modern art. But that of S. Gilles is by far the richer and more elaborate. The whole façade of

this church is one mass of intricate decoration; Norman arches and carved lions, like those of Lombard architecture, mingling fantastically with Greek scrolls of fruit and flowers, with elegant Corinthian columns jutting out upon the church steps, and with the old conventional wave-border that is called Etruscan in our modern jargon. From the midst of florid fret and foliage lean mild faces of saints and Madonnas. Symbols of evangelists with half-human, half-animal eyes and wings, are interwoven with the leafy bowers of cupids. Grave apostles stand erect beneath acanthus wreaths that ought to crisp the forehead of a laughing Faun or Bacchus. And yet so full, exuberant, and deftly chosen are these various elements, that there remains no sense of incongruity or discord. The mediæval spirit had much trouble to disentangle itself from classic reminiscences; and fortunately for the picturesqueness of S. Gilles, it did not succeed. How strangely different is the result of this transition in the south from those severe and rigid forms which we call Romanesque in Germany and Normandy and England!

THE CORNICE

It was a dull afternoon in February when we left Nice, and drove across the mountains to Mentone. Over hill and sea hung a thick mist. Turbia's Roman tower stood up in cheerless solitude, wreathed round with driving vapour, and the rocky nest of Esa seemed suspended in a chaos between sea and sky. Sometimes the fog broke and showed us Villafranca, lying green and flat in the deep blue below: sometimes a distant view of higher peaks swam into sight from the shifting cloud. But the whole scene was desolate. Was it for this that we had left our English home, and travelled from London day and night? At length we reached the edge of the cloud, and jingled down by Roccabruna and the olive-groves, till one by one Mentone's villas came in sight, and at last we found ourselves at the inn door. That night, and all next day and the next night, we heard the hoarse sea beat and thunder on the beach. The rain and wind kept driving from the south, but we consoled ourselves with thinking that the orange-trees and every kind of flower were drinking in the moisture and waiting to rejoice in sunlight which would come.

It was a Sunday morning when we woke and found that the rain had gone, the sun was shining brightly on the sea, and a clear north wind was blowing cloud and mist away. Out upon the hills we went, not caring much what path we took; for everything was beautiful, and hill and vale were

full of garden walks. Through lemon-groves,—pale, golden-tender trees,—and olives, stretching their grey boughs against the lonely cottage tiles, we climbed, until we reached the pines and heath above. Then I knew the meaning of Theocritus for the first time. We found a well, broad, deep, and clear, with green herbs growing at the bottom, a runlet flowing from it down the rocky steps, maidenhair, black adiantum, and blue violets, hanging from the brink and mirrored in the water. This was just the well in *Hylas*. Theocritus has been badly treated. They call him a court poet, dead to Nature, artificial in his pictures. Yet I recognised this fountain by his verse, just as if he had showed me the very spot. Violets grow everywhere, of every shade, from black to lilac. Their stalks are long, and the flowers 'nod' upon them, so that I see how the Greeks could make them into chaplets—how Lycidas wore his crown of white violets [1] lying by the fireside elbow-deep in withered asphodel, watching the chestnuts in the embers, and softly drinking deep healths to Ageanax far off upon the waves. It is impossible to go wrong in these valleys. They are cultivated to the height of about five hundred feet above the sea, in terraces laboriously built up with walls, earthed and manured, and irrigated by means of tanks and aqueducts. Above this level, where the virgin soil has not been yet reclaimed, or where the winds of winter bring down freezing currents from the mountains through a gap or gully of the lower hills, a tangled growth of heaths and arbutus, and pines, and rosemarys, and myrtles, continue the vegetation, till it finally ends in bare grey rocks and peaks some thousand feet in height. Far above all signs of cultiva-

[1] This begs the question whether λευκόϊον does not properly mean snowflake, or some such flower. Violets in Greece, however, were often used for crowns: ἰοστέφανος is the epithet of Homer for Aphrodite, and of Aristophanes for Athens.

tion on these arid peaks, you still may see villages and ruined castles, built centuries ago for a protection from the Moorish pirates. To these mountain fastnesses the people of the coast retreated when they descried the sails of their foes on the horizon. In Mentone, not very long ago, old men might be seen who in their youth were said to have been taken captive by the Moors; and many Arabic words have found their way into the patois of the people.

There is something strangely fascinating in the sight of these ruins on the burning rocks, with their black sentinel cypresses, immensely tall and far away. Long years and rain and sunlight have made these castellated eyries one with their native stone. It is hard to trace in their foundations where Nature's workmanship ends and where man's begins. What strange sights the mountain villagers must see! The vast blue plain of the unfurrowed deep, the fairy range of Corsica hung midway between the sea and sky at dawn or sunset, the stars so close above their heads, the deep dew-sprinkled valleys, the green pines! On penetrating into one of these hill-fortresses, you find that it is a whole village, with a church and castle and piazza, some few feet square, huddled together on a narrow platform. We met one day three magnates of Gorbio taking a morning stroll backwards and forwards, up and down their tiny square. Vehemently gesticulating, loudly chattering, they talked as though they had not seen each other for ten years, and were but just unloading their budgets of accumulated news. Yet these three men probably had lived, eaten, drunk, and talked together from the cradle to that hour: so true it is that use and custom quicken all our powers, especially of gossiping and scandal-mongering. S. Agnese is the highest and most notable of all these villages. The cold and heat upon its absolutely barren rock must be alike intolerable. In appearance

it is not unlike the Etruscan towns of Central Italy; but there is something, of course, far more imposing in the immense antiquity and the historical associations of a Narni, a Fiesole, a Chiusi, or an Orvieto. Sea-life and rusticity strike a different note from that of those Apennine-girdled seats of dead civilisation, in which nations, arts, and religions have gone by and left but few traces,—some wrecks of giant walls, some excavated tombs, some shrines, where monks still sing and pray above the relics of the founders of once world-shaking, now almost forgotten, orders. Here at Mentone there is none of this; the idyllic is the true note, and Theocritus is still alive.

We do not often scale these altitudes, but keep along the terraced glades by the side of olive-shaded streams. The violets, instead of peeping shyly from hedgerows, fall in ripples and cascades over mossy walls among maidenhair and spleen-worts. They are very sweet, and the sound of trickling water seems to mingle with their fragrance in a most delicious harmony. Sound, smell, and hue make up one chord, the sense of which is pure and perfect peace. The country-people are kind, letting us pass everywhere, so that we make our way along their aqueducts and through their gardens, under laden lemon-boughs, the pale fruit dangling at our ears, and swinging showers of scented dew upon us as we pass. Far better, however, than lemon or orange trees, are the olives. Some of these are immensely old, numbering, it is said, five centuries, so that Petrarch may almost have rested beneath their shade on his way to Avignon. These veterans are cavernous with age: gnarled, split, and twisted trunks, throwing out arms that break into a hundred branches; every branch distinct, and feathered with innumerable sparks and spikelets of white, wavy, greenish light. These are the leaves, and the stems are grey with lichens. The sky and sea—two blues, one full

of sunlight and the other purple—set these fountains of perennial brightness like gems in lapis-lazuli. At a distance the same olives look hoary and soft—a veil of woven light or luminous haze. When the wind blows their branches all one way, they ripple like a sea of silver. But underneath their covert, in the shade, grey periwinkles wind among the snowy drift of allium. The narcissus sends its arrowy fragrance through the air, while, far and wide, red anemones burn like fire, with interchange of blue and lilac buds, white arums, orchises, and pink gladiolus. Wandering there, and seeing the pale flowers, stars white and pink and odorous, we dream of Olivet, or the grave Garden of the Agony, and the trees seem always whispering of sacred things. How people can blaspheme against the olives, and call them imitations of the willow, or complain that they are shabby shrubs, I do not know.[1]

This shore would stand for Shelley's Island of Epipsychidion, or the golden age which Empedocles describes, when the mild nations worshipped Aphrodite with incense and the images of beasts and yellow honey, and no blood was spilt upon her altars—when 'the trees flourished with perennial leaves and fruit, and ample crops adorned their boughs through all the year.' This even now is literally true of the lemon-groves, which do not cease to flower and ripen. Everything fits in to complete the reproduction of Greek pastoral life. The goats eat cytisus and myrtle on the shore; a whole flock gathered round me as I sat beneath a tuft of golden green euphorbia the other day, and nibbled bread from my hands. The frog still croaks by tank and

[1] Olive-trees must be studied at Mentone or San Remo, in Corfu, at Tivoli, on the coast between Syracuse and Catania, or on the lowlands of Apulia. The stunted but productive trees of the Rhone valley, for example, are no real measure of the beauty they can exhibit.

fountain, 'whom the Muses have ordained to sing for aye,' in spite of Bion's death. The narcissus, anemone, and hyacinth still tell their tales of love and death. Hesper still gazes on the shepherd from the mountain-head. The slender cypresses still vibrate, the pines murmur. Pan sleeps in noontide heat, and goat-herds and wayfaring men lie down to slumber by the roadside, under olive-boughs in which cicadas sing. The little villages high up are just as white, the mountains just as grey and shadowy when evening falls. Nothing is changed—except ourselves. I expect to find a statue of Priapus or pastoral Pan, hung with wreaths of flowers—the meal cake, honey, and spilt wine upon his altar, and young boys and maidens dancing round. Surely, in some far-off glade, by the side of lemon-grove or garden, near the village, there must be still a pagan remnant of glad Nature-worship. Surely I shall chance upon some Thyrsis piping in the pine-tree shade, or Daphne flying from the arms of Phœbus. So I dream until I come upon the Calvary set on a solitary hillock, with its prayer-steps lending a wide prospect across the olives and the orange-trees, and the broad valleys, to immeasurable skies and purple seas. There is the iron cross, the wounded heart, the spear, the reed, the nails, the crown of thorns, the cup of sacrificial blood, the title, with its super-scription royal and divine. The other day we crossed a brook and entered a lemon-field, rich with blossoms and carpeted with red anemones. Everything basked in sunlight and glittered with exceeding brilliancy of hue. A tiny white chapel stood in a corner of the enclosure. Two iron-grated windows let me see inside: it was a bare place, containing nothing but a wooden praying-desk, black and worm-eaten, an altar with its candles and no flowers, and above the altar a square picture brown with age. On the floor were scattered several pence, and in a vase above the holy-water vessel stood

some withered hyacinths. As my sight became accustomed to the gloom, I could see from the darkness of the picture a pale Christ nailed to the cross with agonising upward eyes and ashy aureole above the bleeding thorns. Thus I stepped suddenly away from the outward pomp and bravery of nature to the inward aspirations, agonies, and martyrdoms of man—from Greek legends of the past to the real Christian present—and I remembered that an illimitable prospect has been opened to the world, that in spite of ourselves we must turn our eyes heavenward, inward, to the infinite unseen beyond us and within our souls. Nothing can take us back to Phœbus or to Pan. Nothing can again identify us with the simple natural earth. '*Une immense espérance a traversé la terre*,' and these chapels, with their deep significances, lurk in the fair landscape like the cares of real life among our dreams of art, or like a fear of death and the hereafter in the midst of opera music. It is a strange contrast. The worship of men in those old times was symbolised by dances in the evening, banquets, libations, and mirth-making. 'Euphrosyne' was alike the goddess of the righteous mind and of the merry heart. Old withered women telling their rosaries at dusk; belated shepherds crossing themselves beneath the stars when they pass the chapel; maidens weighed down with Margaret's anguish of unhappy love; youths vowing their life to contemplation in secluded cloisters,—these are the human forms which gather round such chapels; and the motto of the worshippers consists in this, 'Do often violence to thy desire.' In the Tyrol we have seen whole villages praying together at daybreak before their day's work, singing their *Miserere* and their *Gloria* and their *Dies Iræ* to the sound of crashing organs and jangling bells; appealing in the midst of Nature's splendour to the Spirit which is above Nature, which dwells in darkness rather than light,

and loves the yearnings and contentions of our soul more than its summer gladness and peace. Even the olives here tell more to us of Olivet and the Garden than of the oil-press and the wrestling-ground. The lilies carry us to the Sermon on the Mount, and teach humility, instead of summoning up some legend of a god's love for a mortal. The hillside tanks and running streams, and water-brooks swollen by sudden rain, speak of Palestine. We call the white flowers stars of Bethlehem. The large sceptre-reed; the fig-tree, lingering in barrenness when other trees are full of fruit; the locust-beans of the Caruba:—for one suggestion of Greek idylls there is yet another, of far deeper, dearer power.

But who can resist the influence of Greek ideas at the Cap S. Martin? Down to the verge of the sea stretch the tall, twisted stems of Levant pines, and on the caverned limestone breaks the deep blue water. Dazzling as marble are these rocks, pointed and honeycombed with constant dashing of the restless sea, tufted with corallines and grey and purple seaweeds in the little pools, but hard and dry and rough above tide level. Nor does the sea always lap them quietly; for the last few days it has come tumbling in, roaring and raging on the beach with huge waves crystalline in their transparency, and maned with fleecy spray. Such were the rocks and such the swell of breakers when Ulysses grasped the shore after his long swim. Samphire, very salt and fragrant, grows in the rocky honeycomb; then lentisk and beach-loving myrtle, both exceeding green and bushy; then rosemary and euphorbia above the reach of spray. Fishermen, with their long reeds, sit lazily perched upon black rocks above blue waves, sunning themselves as much as seeking sport. One distant tip of snow, seen far away behind the hills, reminds us of an alien, unremembered winter. While dreaming there, this fancy came into my

head : Polyphemus was born yonder in the Gorbio Valley. There he fed his sheep and goats, and on the hills found scanty pasture for his kine. He and his mother lived in the white house by the cypress near the stream where tulips grow. Young Galatea, nursed in the caverns of these rocks, white as the foam, and shy as the sea fishes, came one morning up the valley to pick mountain hyacinths, and little Polyphemus led the way. He knew where violets and sweet narcissus grew, as well as Galatea where pink coralline and spreading sea-flowers with their waving arms. But Galatea, having filled her lap with bluebells, quite forgot the leaping kids, and piping Cyclops, and cool summer caves, and yellow honey, and black ivy, and sweet vine, and water cold as Alpine snow. Down the swift streamlet she danced laughingly, and made herself once more bitter with the sea. But Polyphemus remained,—hungry, sad, gazing on the barren sea, and piping to the mockery of its waves.

Filled with these Greek fancies, it is strange to come upon a little sandstone dell furrowed by trickling streams and overgrown with English primroses; or to enter the village of Roccabruna, with its mediæval castle and the motto on its walls, *Tempora labuntur tacitisque senescimus annis*. A true motto for the town, where the butcher comes but once a week, and where men and boys, and dogs, and palms, and lemon-trees grow up and flourish and decay in the same hollow of the sunny mountain-side. Into the hard conglomerate of the hill the town is built; house walls and precipices mortised into one another, dovetailed by the art of years gone by, and riveted by age. The same plants grow from both alike—spurge, cistus, rue, and henbane, constant to the desolation of abandoned dwellings. From the castle you look down on roofs, brown tiles and chimney-pots, set one above the other like a big card-castle. Each house has

its foot on a neighbour's neck, and its shoulder set against the native stone. The streets meander in and out, and up and down, overarched and balconied, but very clean. They swarm with children, healthy, happy, little monkeys, who grow fat on salt fish and yellow polenta, with oil and sun *ad libitum*.

At night from Roccabruna you may see the flaring gas-lamps of the gaming-house at Monaco, that Armida's garden of the nineteenth century. It is the sunniest and most sheltered spot of all the coast. Long ago Lucan said of Monaco, '*Non Corus in illum jus habet aut Zephyrus;*' winter never comes to nip its tangled cactuses, and aloes, and geraniums. The air swoons with the scent of lemon-groves; tall palm-trees wave their graceful branches by the shore; music of the softest and the loudest swells from the palace; cool corridors and sunny seats stand ready for the noontide heat or evening calm; without, are olive-gardens, green and fresh and full of flowers. But the witch herself holds her high court and never-ending festival of sin in the painted banquet-halls and among the green tables.

Let us leave this scene and turn with the country-folk of Roccabruna to S. Michael's Church at Mentone. High above the sea it stands, and from its open doors you look across the mountains with their olive-trees. Inside the church is a seething mass of country-folk and townspeople, mostly women, and these almost all old, but picturesque beyond description; kerchiefs of every colour, wrinkles of every shape and depth, skins of every tone of brown and yellow, voices of every gruffness, shrillness, strength, and weakness. Wherever an empty corner can be found, it is soon filled by tottering babies and mischievous children. The country-women come with their large dangling earrings of thin gold, wearing pink tulips or lemon-buds in their black hair. A low buzz of

gossiping and mutual recognition keeps the air alive. The whole service seems a holiday—a general enjoyment of gala dresses and friendly greetings, very different from the silence, immobility, and *noli me tangere* aspect of an English congregation. Over all drones, rattles, snores, and shrieks the organ; wailing, querulous, asthmatic, incomplete, its everlasting nasal chant—always beginning, never ending, through a range of two or three notes ground into one monotony. The voices of the congregation rise and sink above it. These southern people, like the Arabs, the Apulians, and the Spaniards, seem to find their music in a hurdy-gurdy swell of sound. The other day we met a little girl, walking and spinning, and singing all the while, whose song was just another version of this chant. It has a discontented plaintive wail, as if it came from some vast age, and were a cousin of primeval winds.

At first sight, by the side of Mentone, San Remo is sadly prosaic. The valleys seem to sprawl, and the universal olives are monotonously grey upon their thick clay soil. Yet the wealth of flowers in the fat earth is wonderful. One might fancy oneself in a weedy farm flower-bed invaded by stray oats and beans and cabbages and garlic from the kitchen-garden. The country does not suggest a single Greek idea. It has no form or outline—no barren peaks, no spare and difficult vegetation. The beauty is rich but tame—valleys green with oats and corn, blossoming cherry-trees, and sweet bean-fields, figs coming into leaf, and arrowy bay-trees by the side of sparkling streams: here and there a broken aqueduct or rainbow bridge hung with maidenhair and briar and clematis and sarsaparilla.

In the cathedral church of San Siro on Good Friday they hang the columns and the windows with black; they cover the pictures and deface the altar; above the high altar they

raise a crucifix, and below they place a catafalque with the effigy of the dead Christ. To this sad symbol they address their prayers and incense, chant their 'litanies and lurries,' and clash the rattles, which commemorate their rage against the traitor Judas. So far have we already passed away from the Greek feeling of Mentone. As I listened to the hideous din, I could not but remember the Theocritean burial of Adonis. Two funeral beds prepared: two feasts recurring in the springtime of the year. What a difference beneath this superficial similarity—καλὸς νέκυς οἷα καθεύδων—*attritus ægrâ macie*. But the fast of Good Friday is followed by the festival of Easter. That, after all, is the chief difference.

After leaving the cathedral we saw a pretty picture in a dull old street of San Remo—three children leaning from a window, blowing bubbles. The bubbles floated down the street, of every colour, round and trembling, like the dreams of life which children dream. The town is certainly most picturesque. It resembles a huge glacier of houses poured over a wedge of rock, running down the sides and along the ridge, and spreading itself into a fan between two torrents on the shore below. House over house, with balcony and staircase, convent turret and church tower, palm-trees and olives, roof gardens and clinging creepers—this white cataract of buildings streams downward from the lazar-house, and sanctuary, and sandstone quarries on the hill. It is a mass of streets placed close above each other, and linked together with arms and arches of solid masonry, as a protection from the earthquakes, which are frequent at San Remo. The walls are tall, and form a labyrinth of gloomy passages and treacherous blind alleys, where the Moors of old might meet with a ferocious welcome. Indeed, San Remo is a fortress as well as a dwelling-place. Over its gateways may still be traced the pipes for molten lead, and on its walls the eyeloops for

arrows, with brackets for the feet of archers. Masses of building have been shaken down by earthquakes. The ruins of what once were houses gape with blackened chimneys and dark forlorn cellars; mazes of fungus and unhealthy weeds among the still secure habitations. Hardly a ray of light penetrates the streets; one learns the meaning of the Italian word *uggia* from their cold and gloom. During the day they are deserted by every one but babies and witchlike old women —some gossiping, some sitting vacant at the house door, some spinning or weaving, or minding little children—ugly and ancient as are their own homes, yet clean as are the streets. The younger population goes afield; the men on mules laden for the hills, the women burdened like mules with heavy and disgusting loads. It is an exceptionally good-looking race; tall, well-grown, and strong.—But to the streets again. The shops in the upper town are few, chiefly wine-booths and stalls for the sale of salt fish, eggs, and bread, or cobblers' and tinkers' ware. Notwithstanding the darkness of their dwellings, the people have a love of flowers; azaleas lean from their windows, and vines, carefully protected by a sheath of brickwork, climb the six stories, to blossom out into a pergola upon the roof. Look at that mass of greenery and colours, dimly seen from beneath, with a yellow cat sunning herself upon the parapet! To reach such a garden and such sunlight who would not mount six stories and thread a labyrinth of passages? I should prefer a room upon the east side of the town, looking southward to the Molo and the sea, with a sound of water beneath, and a palm soaring up to fan my window with his feathery leaves.

The shrines are little spots of brightness in the gloomy streets. Madonna with a sword; Christ holding His pierced and bleeding heart; l'Eterno Padre pointing to the dead Son stretched upon His knee; some souls in torment; S. Roch

reminding us of old plagues by the spot upon his thigh;—these are the symbols of the shrines. Before them stand rows of pots filled with gillyflowers, placed there by pious, simple, praying hands—by maidens come to tell their sorrows to our Lady rich in sorrow, by old women bent and shrivelled, in hopes of paradise or gratitude for happy days, when Madonna kept Cecchino faithful to his home, or saved the baby from the fever.

Lower down, between the sea and the hill, is the municipal, aristocratic, ecclesiastical quarter of San Remo. There stands the Palace Borea—a truly princely pile, built in the last Renaissance style of splendour, with sea-nymphs and dolphins, and satyric heads, half lips, half leafage, round about its doors and windows. Once it formed the dwelling of a feudal family, but now it is a roomy anthill of a hundred houses, shops, and offices, the Boreas of to-day retaining but a portion of one flat, and making profit of the rest. There, too, are the barracks and the syndic's hall; the Jesuits' school, crowded with boys and girls; the shops for clothes, confectionery, and trinkets; the piazza, with its fountain and tasselled planes, and flowery chestnut-trees, a mass of greenery. Under these trees the idlers lounge, boys play at leap-frog, men at bowls. Women in San Remo work all day, but men and boys play for the most part at bowls or toss-penny or leap-frog or morra. San Siro, the cathedral, stands at one end of the square. Do not go inside; it has a sickly smell of immemorial incense and garlic, undefinable and horrible. Far better looks San Siro from the parapet above the torrent. There you see its irregular half-Gothic outline across a tangle of lemon-trees and olives. The stream rushes by through high walls, covered with creepers, spanned by ferny bridges, feathered by one or two old tufty palms. And over all rises the ancient turret of San Siro, like a Spanish giralda, a minaret of pinnacles and

pyramids and dome bubbles, with windows showing heavy bells, old clocks, and sundials painted on the walls, and a cupola of green and yellow tiles like serpent-scales, to crown the whole. The sea lies beyond, and the house-roofs break it with grey horizontal lines. Then there are convents, legions of them, large white edifices, Jesuitical apparently for the most part, clanging importunate bells, leaning rose-blossoms and cypress-boughs over their jealous walls.

Lastly, there is the port—the mole running out into the sea, the quay planted with plane-trees, and the fishing-boats—by which San Remo is connected with the naval glory of the past—with the Riviera that gave birth to Columbus—with the Liguria that the Dorias ruled—with the great name of Genoa. The port is empty enough now; but from the pier you look back on San Remo and its circling hills, a jewelled town set in illimitable olive greyness. The quay seems also to be the cattle-market. There the small buff cows of North Italy repose after their long voyage or march, kneeling on the sandy ground or rubbing their sides against the wooden cross awry with age and shorn of all its symbols. Lambs frisk among the boats; impudent kids nibble the drooping ears of patient mules. Hinds in white jackets and knee-breeches made of skins, lead shaggy rams and fiercely bearded goats, ready to butt at every barking dog, and always seeking opportunities of flight. Farmers and parish priests in black petticoats feel the cattle and dispute about the price, or whet their bargains with a draught of wine. Meanwhile the nets are brought on shore glittering with the fry of sardines, which are cooked like whitebait, with cuttlefish—amorphous objects stretching shiny feelers on the hot dry sand—and prickly purple eggs of the sea-urchin. Women go about their labour through the throng, some carrying stones upon their heads, or unloading boats and bearing planks of wood in single file, two marching

side by side beneath one load of lime, others scarcely visible under a stack of oats, another with her baby in its cradle fast asleep.

San Remo has an elder brother among the hills, which is called San Romolo, after one of the old bishops of Genoa. Who San Remo was is buried in remote antiquity; but his town has prospered, while of San Romolo nothing remains but a ruined hill-convent among pine-trees. The old convent is worth visiting. Its road carries you into the heart of the sierra which surrounds San Remo, a hill-country something like the Jura, undulating and green to the very top with maritime pines and pinasters. Riding up, you hear all manner of Alpine sounds; brawling streams, tinkling cow-bells, and herdsmen calling to each other on the slopes. Beneath you lies San Remo, scarcely visible; and over it the great sea rises ever so far into the sky, until the white sails hang in air, and cloud and sea-line melt into each other indistinguishably. Spanish chestnuts surround the monastery with bright blue gentians, hepaticas, forget-me-nots, and primroses about their roots. The house itself is perched on a knoll with ample prospect to the sea and to the mountains, very near to heaven, within a theatre of noble contemplations and soul-stirring thoughts. If Mentone spoke to me of the poetry of Greek pastoral life, this convent speaks of mediæval monasticism—of solitude with God, above, beneath, and all around, of silence and repose from agitating cares, of continuity in prayer, and changelessness of daily life. Some precepts of the *Imitatio* came into my mind: 'Be never wholly idle; read or write, pray or meditate, or work with diligence for the common needs.' 'Praiseworthy is it for the religious man to go abroad but seldom, and to seem to shun, and keep his eyes from men.' 'Sweet is the cell when it is often sought, but if we gad about, it wearies us by its

seclusion.' Then I thought of the monks so living in this solitude; their cell windows looking across the valley to the sea, through summer and winter, under sun and stars. Then would they read or write, what long melodious hours! or would they pray, what stations on the pine-clad hills! or would they toil, what terraces to build and plant with corn, what flowers to tend, what cows to milk and pasture, what wood to cut, what fir-cones to gather for the winter fire! or should they yearn for silence, silence from their comrades of the solitude, what whispering galleries of God, where never human voice breaks loudly, but winds and streams and lonely birds disturb the awful stillness! In such a hermitage as this, only more wild, lived S. Francis of Assisi, among the Apennines.[1] It was there that he learned the tongues of beasts and birds, and preached them sermons. Stretched for hours motionless on the bare rocks, coloured like them and rough like them in his brown peasant's serge, he prayed and meditated, saw the vision of Christ crucified, and planned his order to regenerate a vicious age. So still he lay, so long, so like a stone, so gentle were his eyes, so kind and low his voice, that the mice nibbled breadcrumbs from his wallet, lizards ran over him, and larks sang to him in the air. There, too, in those long, solitary vigils, the Spirit of God came upon him, and the spirit of Nature was even as God's Spirit, and he sang: 'Laudato sia Dio mio Signore, con tutte le creature, specialmente messer lo frate sole; per suor luna, e per le stelle; per frate vento e per l'aire, e nuvolo, e sereno e ogni tempo.' Half the value of this hymn would be lost were we to forget how it was written, in what solitudes and mountains far from men, or to ticket it with some abstract word like Pantheism. Pantheism it is not; but an acknowledgment of that brotherhood, beneath the love of God, by which the sun

[1] Dante, Par. xi. 106.

and moon and stars, and wind and air and cloud, and clearness and all weather, and all creatures, are bound together with the soul of man.

Few, of course, were like S. Francis. Probably no monk of San Romolo was inspired with his enthusiasm for humanity, or had his revelation of the Divine Spirit inherent in the world. Still fewer can have felt the æsthetic charm of Nature but most vaguely. It was as much as they could boast, if they kept steadily to the rule of their order, and attended to the concerns each of his own soul. A terrible selfishness, if rightly considered; but one which accorded with the delusion that this world is a cave of care, the other world a place of torture or undying bliss, death the prime object of our meditation, and lifelong abandonment of our fellow-men the highest mode of existence. Why, then, should monks, so persuaded of the riddle of the earth, have placed themselves in scenes so beautiful? Why rose the Camaldolis and Chartreuses over Europe? white convents on the brows of lofty hills, among the rustling boughs of Vallombrosas, in the grassy meadows of Engelbergs,—always the eyries of Nature's lovers, men smitten with the loveliness of earth? There is surely some meaning in these poetic stations.

Here is a sentence of the *Imitatio* which throws some light upon the hymn of S. Francis and the sites of Benedictine monasteries, by explaining the value of natural beauty for monks who spent their life in studying death: 'If thy heart were right, then would every creature be to thee a mirror of life, and a book of holy doctrine. There is no creature so small and vile that does not show forth the goodness of God.' With this sentence bound about their foreheads, walked Fra Angelico and S. Francis. To men like them the mountain valleys and the skies, and all that they contained, were full of deep significance. Though they reasoned '*de conditione*

humanæ miseriæ,' and '*de contemptu mundi*,' yet the whole world was a pageant of God's glory, a testimony to His goodness. Their chastened senses, pure hearts, and simple wills were as wings by which they soared above the things of earth, and sent the music of their souls aloft with every other creature in the symphony of praise. To them, as to Blake, the sun was no mere blazing disc or ball, but 'an innumerable company of the heavenly host singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty."' To them the winds were brothers, and the streams were sisters—brethren in common dependence upon God their Father, brethren in common consecration to His service, brethren by blood, brethren by vows of holiness. Unquestioning faith rendered this world no puzzle; they overlooked the things of sense because the spiritual things were ever present, and as clear as day. Yet did they not forget that spiritual things are symbolised by things of sense; and so the smallest herb of grass was vital to their tranquil contemplations. We who have lost sight of the invisible world, who set our affections more on things of earth, fancy that because these monks despised the world, and did not write about its landscapes, therefore they were dead to its beauty. This is mere vanity: the mountains, stars, seas, fields, and living things were only swallowed up in the one thought of God, and made subordinate to the awfulness of human destinies. We to whom hills are hills, and seas are seas, and stars are ponderable quantities, speak, write, and reason of them as of objects interesting in themselves. The monks were less ostensibly concerned about such things, because they only found in them the vestibules and symbols of a hidden mystery.

The contrast between the Greek and mediæval modes of regarding Nature is not a little remarkable. Both Greeks and monks, judged by nineteenth-century standards, were

unobservant of natural beauties. They make but brief and general remarks upon landscapes and the like. The *ποντίων τε κυμάτων ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα* is very rare. But the Greeks stopped at the threshold of Nature; the forces they found there, the gods, were inherent in Nature, and distinct. They did not, like the monks, place one spiritual power, omnipotent and omnipresent, above all, and see in Nature lessons of Divine government. We ourselves having somewhat overstrained the latter point of view, are now apt to return vaguely to Greek fancies. Perhaps, too, we talk so much about scenery because it is *scenery* to us, and the life has gone out of it.

I cannot leave the Cornice without one word about a place which lies between Mentone and San Remo. Bordighera has a beauty which is quite distinct from both. Palms are its chief characteristics. They lean against the garden walls, and feather the wells outside the town, where women come with brazen pitchers to draw water. In some of the marshy tangles of the plain, they spring from a thick undergrowth of spiky leaves, and rear their tall aërial arms against the deep blue background of the sea or darker purple of the distant hills. White pigeons fly about among their branches, and the air is loud with cooings and with rustlings, and the hoarser croaking of innumerable frogs. Then, in the olive-groves that stretch along the level shore, are labyrinths of rare and curious plants, painted tulips and white periwinkles, flinging their light of blossoms and dark glossy leaves down the swift channels of the brawling streams. On each side of the rivulets they grow, like sister cataracts of flowers instead of spray. At night fresh stars come out along the coast, beneath the stars of heaven; for you can see the lamps of Ventimiglia and Mentone and Monaco, and, far away, the lighthouses upon the promontories of Antibes and the Estrelles. At dawn, a vision of Corsica grows from the sea. The island lies eighty miles away, but

one can trace the dark strip of irregular peaks glowing amid the gold and purple of the rising sun. If the air is clear and bright, the snows and overvaulting clouds which crown its mountains shine all day, and glitter like an apparition in the bright blue sky. 'Phantom fair,' half raised above the sea, it stands, as unreal and transparent as the moon when seen in April sunlight, yet not to be confounded with the shape of any cloud. If Mentone speaks of Greek legends, and San Romolo restores the monastic past, we feel ourselves at Bordighera transported to the East; and lying under its tall palms can fancy ourselves at Tyre or Daphne, or in the gardens of a Moslem prince.

Note.—Dec. 1873. My old impressions are renewed and confirmed by a third visit, after seven years, to this coast. For purely idyllic loveliness, the Cornice is surpassed by nothing in the South. A very few spots in Sicily, the road between Castellammare and Amalfi, and the island of Corfu, are its only rivals in this style of scenery. From Cannes to Sestri is one continuous line of exquisitely modulated landscape beauty, which can only be fully appreciated by travellers in carriage or on foot.

AJACCIO

It generally happens that visitors to Ajaccio pass over from the Cornice coast, leaving Nice at night, and waking about sunrise to find themselves beneath the frowning mountains of Corsica. The difference between the scenery of the island and the shores which they have left is very striking. Instead of the rocky mountains of the Cornice, intolerably dry and barren at their summits, but covered at their base with villages and ancient towns and olive-fields, Corsica presents a scene of solitary and peculiar grandeur. The highest mountain-tops are covered with snow, and beneath the snow-level to the sea they are as green as Irish or as English hills, but nearly uninhabited and uncultivated. Valleys of almost Alpine verdure are succeeded by tracts of chestnut wood and scattered pines, or deep and flowery brushwood—the 'maquis' of Corsica, which yields shelter to its traditional outlaws and bandits. Yet upon these hillsides there are hardly any signs of life; the whole country seems abandoned to primeval wildness and the majesty of desolation. Nothing can possibly be more unlike the smiling Riviera, every square mile of which is cultivated like a garden, and every valley and bay dotted over with white villages. After steaming for a few hours along this savage coast, the rocks which guard the entrance to the bay of Ajaccio, murderous-looking teeth and needles ominously christened Sanguinari, are passed, and we enter the splendid land-locked harbour, on the northern shore of which

Ajaccio is built. About three centuries ago the town, which used to occupy the extreme or eastern end of the bay, was removed to a more healthy point upon the northern coast, so that Ajaccio is quite a modern city. Visitors who expect to find in it the picturesqueness of Genoa or San Remo, or even of Mentone, will be sadly disappointed. It is simply a healthy, well-appointed town of recent date, the chief merits of which are, that it has wide streets, and is free, externally at least, from the filth and rubbish of most southern seaports.

But if Ajaccio itself is not picturesque, the scenery which it commands, and in the heart of which it lies, is of the most magnificent. The bay of Ajaccio resembles a vast Italian lake —a Lago Maggiore, with greater space between the mountains and the shore. From the snow-peaks of the interior, huge granite crystals clothed in white, to the southern extremity of the bay, peak succeeds peak and ridge rises behind ridge in a line of wonderful variety and beauty. The atmospheric changes of light and shadow, cloud and colour, on this upland country, are as subtle and as various as those which lend their beauty to the scenery of the lakes, while the sea below is blue and rarely troubled. One could never get tired with looking at this view. Morning and evening add new charms to its sublimity and beauty. In the early morning Monte d'Oro sparkles like a Monte Rosa with its fresh snow, and the whole inferior range puts on the crystal blueness of dawn among the Alps. In the evening, violet and purple tints and the golden glow of Italian sunset lend a different lustre to the fairyland. In fact, the beauties of Switzerland and Italy are curiously blended in this landscape.

In soil and vegetation the country round Ajaccio differs much from the Cornice. There are very few olive-trees, nor is the cultivated ground backed up so immediately by stony mountains; but between the seashore and the hills there is

plenty of space for pasture-land, and orchards of apricot and peach-trees, and orange gardens. This undulating champaign, green with meadows and watered with clear streams, is very refreshing to the eyes of Northern people, who may have wearied of the bareness and greyness of Nice or Mentone. It is traversed by excellent roads, recently constructed on a plan of the French Government, which intersect the country in all directions, and offer an infinite variety of rides or drives to visitors. The broken granite of which these roads are made is very pleasant for riding over. Most of the hills through which they strike, after starting from Ajaccio, are clothed with a thick brushwood of box, ilex, lentisk, arbutus, and laurustinus, which stretches down irregularly into vineyards, olive-gardens, and meadows. It is, indeed, the native growth of the island; for wherever a piece of ground is left untilled, the macchi grow up, and the scent of their multitudinous aromatic blossoms is so strong that it may be smelt miles out at sea. Napoleon, at S. Helena, referred to this fragrance when he said that he should know Corsica blindfold by the smell of its soil. Occasional woods of holm oak make darker patches on the landscape, and a few pines fringe the side of enclosure walls or towers. The prickly pear runs riot in and out among the hedges and upon the walls, diversifying the colours of the landscape with its strange grey-green masses and unwieldy fans. In spring, when peach and almond trees are in blossom, and when the roadside is starred with asphodels, this country is most beautiful in its gladness. The macchi blaze with cistus flowers of red and silver. Golden broom mixes with the dark purple of the great French lavender, and over the whole mass of blossom wave plumes of Mediterranean heath and sweet-scented yellow coronilla. Under the stems of the ilex peep cyclamens, pink and sweet; the hedgerows are a tangle of vetches, convol-

vuluses, lupines, orchises, and alliums, with here and there a purple iris. It would be difficult to describe all the rare and lovely plants which are found here in a profusion that surpasses even the flower-gardens of the Cornice, and reminds one of the most favoured Alpine valleys in their early spring.

Since the French occupied Corsica they have done much for the island by improving its harbours and making good roads, and endeavouring to mitigate the ferocity of the people. But they have many things to contend against, and Corsica is still behind the other provinces of France. The people are idle, haughty, umbrageous, fiery, quarrelsome, fond of gipsy life, and retentive through generations of old feuds and prejudices to an almost inconceivable extent. Then the nature of the country itself offers serious obstacles to its proper colonisation and cultivation. The savage state of the island and its internal feuds have disposed the Corsicans to quit the seaboard for their mountain villages and fortresses, so that the great plains at the foot of the hills are unwholesome for want of tillage and drainage. Again, the mountains themselves have in many parts been stripped of their forests, and converted into mere wildernesses of macchi stretching up and down their slopes for miles and miles of useless desolation. Another impediment to proper cultivation is found in the old habit of what is called free pasturage. The highland shepherds are allowed by the national custom to drive down their flocks and herds to the lowlands during the winter, so that fences are broken, young crops are browsed over and trampled down, and agriculture becomes a mere impossibility. The last and chief difficulty against which the French have had to contend, and up to this time with apparent success, is brigandage. The Corsican system of brigandage is so very different from that of the Italians, Sicilians, and Greeks, that

a word may be said about its peculiar character. In the first place, it has nothing at all to do with robbery and thieving. The Corsican bandit took to a free life among the macchi, not for the sake of supporting himself by lawless depredation, but because he had put himself under a legal and social ban by murdering some one in obedience to the strict code of honour of his country. His victim may have been the hereditary foe of his house for generations, or else the newly made enemy of yesterday. But in either case, if he had killed him fairly, after a due notification of his intention to do so, he was held to have fulfilled a duty rather than to have committed a crime. He then betook himself to the dense tangles of evergreens which I have described, where he lived upon the charity of countryfolk and shepherds. In the eyes of those simple people it was a sacred duty to relieve the necessities of the outlaws, and to guard them from the bloodhounds of justice. There was scarcely a respectable family in Corsica who had not one or more of its members thus *alla campagna*, as it was euphemistically styled. The Corsicans themselves have attributed this miserable state of things to two principal causes. The first of these was the ancient bad government of the island: under its Genoese rulers no justice was administered, and private vengeance for homicide or insult became a necessary consequence among the haughty and warlike families of the mountain villages. Secondly, the Corsicans have been from time immemorial accustomed to wear arms in everyday life. They used to sit at their house doors and pace the streets with musket, pistol, dagger, and cartouch-box on their persons; and on the most trivial occasion of merriment or enthusiasm they would discharge their firearms. This habit gave a bloody termination to many quarrels, which might have ended more peaceably had the parties been unarmed; and so the seeds of *vendetta* were constantly being

sown. Statistics published by the French Government present a hideous picture of the state of bloodshed in Corsica even during this century. In one period of thirty years (between 1821 and 1850) there were 4319 murders in the island. Almost every man was watching for his neighbour's life, or seeking how to save his own; and agriculture and commerce were neglected for this grisly game of hide-and-seek. In 1853 the French began to take strong measures, and, under the Prefect Thuillier, they hunted the bandits from the macchi, killing between 200 and 300 of them. At the same time an edict was promulgated against bearing arms. It is forbidden to sell the old Corsican stiletto in the shops, and no one may carry a gun, even for sporting purposes, unless he obtains a special licence. These licences, moreover, are only granted for short and precisely measured periods.

In order to appreciate the stern and gloomy character of the Corsicans, it is necessary to leave the smiling gardens of Ajaccio, and to visit some of the more distant mountain villages—Vico, Cavro, Bastelica, or Bocognano, any of which may easily be reached from the capital. Immediately after quitting the seaboard, we enter a country austere in its simplicity, solemn without relief, yet dignified by its majesty and by the sense of freedom it inspires. As we approach the mountains, the macchi become taller, feathering man-high above the road, and stretching far away upon the hills. Gigantic masses of granite, shaped like buttresses and bastions, seem to guard the approaches to these hills; while, looking backward over the green plain, the sea lies smiling in a haze of blue among the rocky horns and misty headlands of the coast. There is a stateliness about the abrupt inclination of these granite slopes, rising from their frowning portals by sharp *arêtes* to the snows piled on their summits, which contrasts in a strange way with the softness and beauty

of the mingling sea and plain beneath. In no landscape are more various qualities combined; in none are they so harmonised as to produce so strong a sense of majestic freedom and severe power. Suppose that we are on the road to Corte, and have now reached Bocognano, the first considerable village since we left Ajaccio. Bocognano might be chosen as typical of Corsican hill-villages, with its narrow street, and tall tower-like houses of five or six stories high, faced with rough granite, and pierced with the smallest windows and very narrow doorways. These buildings have a mournful and desolate appearance. There is none of the grandeur of antiquity about them; no sculptured arms or castellated turrets, or balconies or spacious staircases, such as are common in the poorest towns of Italy. The signs of warlike occupation which they offer, and their sinister aspect of vigilance, are thoroughly prosaic. They seem to suggest a state of society in which feud and violence were systematised into routine. There is no relief to the savage austerity of their forbidding aspect; no signs of wealth or household comfort; no trace of art, no liveliness and gracefulness of architecture. Perched upon their coigns of vantage, these villages seem always menacing, as if Saracen pirates, or Genoese marauders, or bandits bent on vengeance, were still for ever on the watch. Forests of immensely old chestnut-trees surround Bocognano on every side, so that you step from the village streets into the shade of woods that seem to have remained untouched for centuries. The country-people support themselves almost entirely upon the fruit of these chestnuts; and there is a large department of Corsica called Castagniccia, from the prevalence of these trees and the sustenance which the inhabitants derive from them. Close by the village brawls a torrent, such as one may see in the Monte Rosa valleys or the Apennines, but very rarely in Switzerland. It is of a pure green colour,

absolutely like Indian jade, foaming round the granite boulders, and gliding over smooth slabs of polished stone, and eddying into still, deep pools fringed with fern. Monte d'Oro, one of the largest mountains of Corsica, soars above, and from his snows the purest water, undefiled by glacier mud or the *débris* of avalanches, melts away. Following the stream, we rise through the macchi and the chestnut woods, which grow more sparely by degrees, until we reach the zone of beeches. Here the scene seems suddenly transferred to the Pyrenees; for the road is carried along abrupt slopes, thickly set with gigantic beech-trees, overgrown with pink and silver lichens. In the early spring their last year's leaves are still crisp with hoar-frost; one morning's journey has brought us from the summer of Ajaccio to winter on these heights, where no flowers are visible but the pale hellebore and tiny lilac crocuses. Snow-drifts stretch by the roadside, and one by one the pioneers of the vast pine-woods of the interior appear. A great portion of the pine-forest (*Pinus larix*, or Corsican pine, not larch) between Bocognano and Corte had recently been burned by accident when we passed by. Nothing could be more forlorn than the black leafless stems and branches emerging from the snow. Some of these trees were mast-high, and some mere saplings. Corte itself is built among the mountain fastnesses of the interior. The snows and granite cliffs of Monte Rotondo overhang it to the north-west, while two fair valleys lead downward from its eyrie to the eastern coast. The rock on which it stands rises to a sharp point, sloping southward, and commanding the valleys of the Golo and the Tavignano. Remembering that Corte was the old capital of Corsica, and the centre of General Paoli's government, we are led to compare the town with Innsprück, Meran, or Grenoble. In point of scenery and situation it is hardly second to any of these mountain-girdled cities; but its

poverty and bareness are scarcely less striking than those of Bocognano.

The whole Corsican character, with its stern love of justice, its furious revengefulness and wild passion for freedom, seems to be illustrated by the peculiar elements of grandeur and desolation in this landscape. When we traverse the forest of Vico or the rocky pasture-lands of Niolo, the history of the Corsican national heroes, Giudice della Rocca and Sampiero, becomes intelligible, nor do we fail to understand some of the mysterious attraction which led the more daring spirits of the island to prefer a free life among the macchi and pine-woods to placid lawful occupations in farms and villages. The lives of the two men whom I have mentioned are so prominent in Corsican history, and are so often still upon the lips of the common people, that it may be well to sketch their outlines in the foreground of the Salvator Rosa landscape just described. Giudice was the governor of Corsica, as lieutenant for the Pisans, at the end of the thirteenth century. At that time the island belonged to the republic of Pisa, but the Genoese were encroaching on them by land and sea, and the whole life of their brave champion was spent in a desperate struggle with the invaders, until at last he died, old, blind, and in prison, at the command of his savage foes. Giudice was the title which the Pisans usually conferred upon their governor, and Della Rocca deserved it by right of his own inexorable love of justice. Indeed, justice seems to have been with him a passion, swallowing up all other feelings of his nature. All the stories which are told of him turn upon this point in his character; and though they may not be strictly true, they illustrate the stern virtues for which he was celebrated among the Corsicans, and show what kind of men this harsh and gloomy nation loved to celebrate as heroes. This is not the place either to criticise these legends or to recount them at

full length. The most famous and the most characteristic may, however, be briefly told. On one occasion, after a victory over the Genoese, he sent a message that the captives in his hands should be released if their wives and sisters came to sue for them. The Genoese ladies embarked, and arrived in Corsica, and to Giudice's nephew was intrusted the duty of fulfilling his uncle's promise. In the course of executing his commission, the youth was so smitten with the beauty of one of the women that he dishonoured her. Thereupon Giudice had him at once put to death. Another story shows the Spartan justice of this hero in a less savage light. He was passing by a cowherd's cottage, when he heard some young calves bleating. On inquiring what distressed them, he was told that the calves had not enough milk to drink after the farm people had been served. Then Giudice made it a law that the calves throughout the land should take their fill before the cows were milked.

Sampiero belongs to a later period of Corsican history. After a long course of misgovernment the Genoese rule had become unbearable. There was no pretence of administering justice, and private vengeance had full sway in the island. The sufferings of the nation were so great that the time had come for a new judge or saviour to rise among them. Sampiero was the son of obscure parents who lived at Bastelica. But his abilities very soon declared themselves, and made a way for him in the world. He spent his youth in the armies of the Medici and of the French Francis, gaining great renown as a brave soldier. Bayard became his friend, and Francis made him captain of his Corsican bands. But Sampiero did not forget the wrongs of his native land while thus on foreign service. He resolved, if possible, to undermine the power of Genoa, and spent the whole of his manhood and old age in one long struggle with their great captain, Stephen Doria. Of

his stern patriotism and Roman severity of virtue the following story is a terrible illustration. Sampiero, though a man of mean birth, had married an heiress of the noble Corsican house of the Ornani. His wife, Vannina, was a woman of timid and flexible nature, who, though devoted to her husband, fell into the snares of his enemies. During his absence on an embassy to Algiers the Genoese induced her to leave her home at Marseilles and to seek refuge in their city, persuading her that this step would secure the safety of her child. She was starting on her journey when a friend of Sampiero arrested her, and brought her back to Aix, in Provence. Sampiero, when he heard of these events, hurried to France, and was received by a relative of his, who hinted that he had known of Vannina's projected flight. 'E tu hai taciuto?' was Sampiero's only answer, accompanied by a stroke of his poignard that killed the lukewarm cousin. Sampiero now brought his wife from Aix to Marseilles, preserving the most absolute silence on the way, and there, on entering his house, he killed her with his own hand. It is said that he loved Vannina passionately; and when she was dead, he caused her to be buried with magnificence in the church of S. Francis. Like Giudice, Sampiero fell at last a prey to treachery. The murder of Vannina had made the Ornani his deadly foes. In order to avenge her blood, they played into the hands of the Genoese, and laid a plot by which the noblest of the Corsicans was brought to death. First, they gained over to their scheme a monk of Bastelica, called Ambrogio, and Sampiero's own squire and shield-bearer, Vittolo. By means of these men, in whom he trusted, he was drawn defenceless and unattended into a deeply wooded ravine near Cavro, not very far from his birthplace, where the Ornani and their Genoese troops surrounded him. Sampiero fired his pistols in vain, for Vittolo had loaded them with the shot downwards. Then he drew

his sword, and began to lay about him, when the same Vittolo, the Judas, stabbed him from behind, and the old lion fell dead by his friend's hand. Sampiero was sixty-nine when he died, in the year 1567. It is satisfactory to know that the Corsicans have called traitors and foes to their country Vittoli for ever. These two examples of Corsican patriots are enough; we need not add to theirs the history of Paoli—a milder and more humane, but scarcely less heroic leader. Paoli, however, in the hour of Corsica's extremest peril, retired to England, and died in philosophic exile. Neither Giudice nor Sampiero would have acted thus. The more forlorn the hope, the more they struggled.

Among the old Corsican customs which are fast dying out, but which still linger in the remote valleys of Niolo and Vico, is the *vócero*, or funeral chant, improvised by women at funerals over the bodies of the dead. Nothing illustrates the ferocious temper and savage passions of the race better than these *vóceri*, many of which have been written down and preserved. Most of them are songs of vengeance and imprecation, mingled with hyperbolical laments and utterances of extravagant grief, poured forth by wives and sisters at the side of murdered husbands and brothers. The women who sing them seem to have lost all milk of human kindness, and to have exchanged the virtues of their sex for Spartan fortitude and the rage of furies. While we read their turbid lines we are carried in imagination to one of the cheerless houses of Bastelica or Bocognano, overshadowed by its mournful chestnut-tree, on which the blood of the murdered man is yet red. The *gridata*, or wake, is assembled in a dark room. On the wooden board, called *tola*, the corpse lies stretched; and round it are women, veiled in the blue-black mantle of Corsican costume, moaning and rocking themselves upon their chairs. The *pasto* or *conforto*, food supplied for mourners,

stands upon a side table, and round the room are men with savage eyes and bristling beards, armed to the teeth, keen for vengeance. The dead man's musket and pocket-pistol lie beside him, and his bloody shirt is hung up at his head. Suddenly, the silence, hitherto only disturbed by suppressed groans and muttered curses, is broken by a sharp cry. A woman rises: it is the sister of the dead man; she seizes his shirt, and holding it aloft with Mænad gestures and frantic screams, gives rhythmic utterance to her grief and rage. 'I was spinning, when I heard a great noise: it was a gunshot, which went into my heart, and seemed a voice that cried, "Run, thy brother is dying." I ran into the room above; I took the blow into my breast; I said, "Now he is dead, there is nothing to give me comfort. Who will undertake thy vengeance? When I show thy shirt, who will vow to let his beard grow till the murderer is slain? Who is there left to do it? A mother near her death? A sister? Of all our race there is only left a woman, without kin, poor, orphan, and a girl. Yet, O my brother! never fear. For thy vengeance thy sister is enough!

'"Ma per fà la to bindetta,
Sta siguru, basta anch ella!

Give me the pistol; I will shoulder the gun; I will away to the hills. My brother, heart of thy sister, thou shalt be avenged!"' A *vócero* declaimed upon the bier of Giammatteo and Pasquale, two cousins, by the sister of the former, is still fiercer and more energetic in its malediction. This Erinnys of revenge prays Christ and all the saints to extirpate the murderer's whole race, to shrivel it up till it passes from the earth. Then, with a sudden and vehement transition to the pathos of her own sorrow, she exclaims:—

'Halla mai bista nissunu
Tumbà l'omi pe li canti?'

It appears from these words that Giammatteo's enemies had killed him because they were jealous of his skill in singing. Shortly after, she curses the curate of the village, a kinsman of the murderer, for refusing to toll the funeral bells; and at last, all other threads of rage and sorrow being twined and knotted into one, she gives loose to her raging thirst for blood: 'If only I had a son, to train like a sleuth-hound, that he might track the murderer! Oh, if I had a son! Oh, if I had a lad!' Her words seem to choke her, and she swoons, and remains for a short time insensible. When the Bacchante of revenge awakes, it is with milder feelings in her heart: 'O brother mine, Matteo! art thou sleeping? Here I will rest with thee and weep till daybreak.' It is rare to find in literature so crude and intense an expression of fiery hatred as these untranslatable *vóceri* present. The emotion is so simple and so strong that it becomes sublime by mere force, and affects us with a strange pathos when contrasted with the tender affection conveyed in such terms of endearment as 'my dove,' 'my flower,' 'my pheasant,' 'my bright painted orange,' addressed to the dead. In the *vóceri* it often happens that there are several interlocutors: one friend questions and another answers; or a kinswoman of the murderer attempts to justify the deed, and is overwhelmed with deadly imprecations. Passionate appeals are made to the corpse: 'Arise! Do you not hear the women cry? Stand up. Show your wounds, and let the fountains of your blood flow! Alas! he is dead; he sleeps; he cannot hear!' Then they turn again to tears and curses, feeling that no help or comfort can come from the clay-cold form. The intensity of grief finds strange language for its utterance. A girl, mourning over her father, cries:—

'Mi l'hannu crucifissatu
Cume Ghiesu Cristu in croce.'

Once only, in Viale's collection, does any friend of the dead remember mercy. It is an old woman, who points to the crucifix above the bier.

But all the *vóceri* are not so murderous. Several are composed for girls who died unwedded and before their time, by their mothers or companions. The language of these laments is far more tender and ornate. They praise the gentle virtues and beauty of the girl, her piety and helpful household ways. The most affecting of these dirges is that which celebrates the death of Romana, daughter of Dariola Danesi. Here is a pretty picture of the girl: 'Among the best and fairest maidens you were like a rose among flowers, like the moon among stars; so far more lovely were you than the loveliest. The youths in your presence were like lighted torches, but full of reverence; you were courteous to all, but with none familiar. In church they gazed at you, but you looked at none of them; and after mass you said, "Mother, let us go." Oh! who will console me for your loss? Why did the Lord so much desire you? But now you rest in heaven, all joy and smiles; for the world was not worthy of so fair a face. Oh, how far more beautiful will Paradise be now!' Then follows a piteous picture of the old bereaved mother, to whom a year will seem a thousand years, who will wander among relatives without affection, neighbours without love; and who, when sickness comes, will have no one to give her a drop of water, or to wipe the sweat from her brow, or to hold her hand in death. Yet all that is left for her is to wait and pray for the end, that she may join again her darling.

But it is time to return to Ajaccio itself. At present the attractions and ornaments of the town consist of a good public library, Cardinal Fesch's large but indifferent collection of pictures, two monuments erected to Napoleon, and Napoleon's house. It will always be the chief pride of Ajaccio that she

gave birth to the great emperor. Close to the harbour, in a public square by the sea-beach, stands an equestrian statue of the conqueror, surrounded by his four brothers on foot. They are all attired in Roman fashion, and are turned seaward, to the west, as if to symbolise the emigration of this family to subdue Europe. There is something ludicrous and forlorn in the stiffness of the group—something even pathetic, when we think how Napoleon gazed seaward from another island, no longer on horseback, no longer laurel-crowned, an unthroned, unseated conqueror, on S. Helena. His father's house stands close by. An old Italian waiting-woman, who had been long in the service of the Murats, keeps it and shows it. She has the manners of a lady, and can tell many stories of the various members of the Buonaparte family. Those who fancy that Napoleon was born in a mean dwelling of poor parents will be surprised to find so much space and elegance in these apartments. Of course his family was not rich by comparison with the riches of French or English nobles. But for Corsicans they were well-to-do, and their house has an air of antique dignity. The chairs of the entrance-saloon have been literally stripped of their coverings by enthusiastic visitors; the horse-hair stuffing underneath protrudes itself with a sort of comic pride, as if protesting that it came to be so tattered in an honourable service. Some of the furniture seems new; but many old presses, inlaid with marbles, agates, and lapis-lazuli, such as Italian families preserve for generations, have an air of respectable antiquity about them. Nor is there any doubt that the young Napoleon led his minuets beneath the stiff girandoles of the formal dancing-room. There, too, in a dark back chamber, is the bed in which he was born. At its foot is a photograph of the Prince Imperial sent by the Empress Eugénie, who, when she visited the room, wept much—

pianse molto (to use the old lady's phrase)—at seeing the place where such lofty destinies began. On the wall of the same room is a portrait of Napoleon himself as the young general of the republic—with the citizen's unkempt hair, the fierce fire of the Revolution in his eyes, a frown upon his forehead, lips compressed, and quivering nostrils; also one of his mother, the pastille of a handsome woman, with Napoleonic eyes and brows and nose, but with a vacant simpering mouth. Perhaps the provincial artist knew not how to seize the expression of this feature, the most difficult to draw. For we cannot fancy that Letizia had lips without the firmness or the fulness of a majestic nature.

The whole first story of this house belonged to the Buonaparte family. The windows look out partly on a little court and partly on narrow streets. It was, no doubt, the memory of this home that made Napoleon, when emperor, design schemes for the good of Corsica—schemes that might have brought him more honour than many conquests, but which he had no time or leisure to carry out. On S. Helena his mind often reverted to them, and he would speak of the gummy odours of the macchi wafted from the hillsides to the seashore.

MONTE GENEROSO

The long hot days of Italian summer were settling down on plain and country when, in the last week of May, we travelled northward from Florence and Bologna seeking coolness. That was very hard to find in Lombardy. The days were long and sultry, the nights short, without a respite from the heat. Milan seemed a furnace, though in the Duomo and the narrow shady streets there was a twilight darkness which at least looked cool. Long may it be before the northern spirit of improvement has taught the Italians to despise the wisdom of their forefathers, who built those sombre streets of palaces with overhanging eaves, that, almost meeting, form a shelter from the fiercest sun. The lake country was even worse than the towns; the sunlight lay all day asleep upon the shining waters, and no breeze came to stir their surface or to lift the tepid veil of haze, through which the stony mountains, with their yet unmelted patches of winter snow, glared as if in mockery of coolness.

Then we heard of a new inn, which had just been built by an enterprising Italian doctor below the very top of Monte Generoso. There was a picture of it in the hotel at Cadenabbia, but this gave but little idea of any particular beauty. A big square house, with many windows, and the usual ladies on mules, and guides with alpenstocks, advancing towards it, and some round bushes growing near, was all it showed. Yet there hung the real Monte Generoso above our heads, and we

thought it must be cooler on its height than by the lake-shore. To find coolness was the great point with us just then. Moreover, some one talked of the wonderful plants that grew among its rocks, and of its grassy slopes enamelled with such flowers as make our cottage gardens at home gay in summer, not to speak of others rarer and peculiar to the region of the Southern Alps. Indeed, the Generoso has a name for flowers, and it deserves it, as we presently found.

This mountain is fitted by its position for commanding one of the finest views in the whole range of the Lombard Alps. A glance at the map shows that. Standing out pre-eminent among the chain of lower hills to which it belongs, the lakes of Lugano and Como with their long arms enclose it on three sides, while on the fourth the plain of Lombardy with its many cities, its rich pasture-lands and cornfields intersected by winding river-courses and straight interminable roads, advances to its very foot. No place could be better chosen for surveying that contrasted scene of plain and mountain, which forms the great attraction of the outlying buttresses of the central Alpine mass. The superiority of the Monte Generoso to any of the similar eminences on the northern outskirts of Switzerland is great. In richness of colour, in picturesqueness of suggestion, in sublimity and breadth of prospect, its advantages are incontestable. The reasons for this superiority are obvious. On the Italian side the transition from mountain to plain is far more abrupt; the atmosphere being clearer, a larger sweep of distance is within our vision; again, the sunlight blazes all day long upon the very front and forehead of the distant Alpine chain, instead of merely slanting along it, as it does upon the northern side.

From Mendrisio, the village at the foot of the mountain, an easy mule-path leads to the hotel, winding first through

English-looking hollow lanes with real hedges, which are rare in this country, and English primroses beneath them. Then comes a forest region of luxuriant chestnut-trees, giants with pink boles just bursting into late leafage, yellow and tender, but too thin as yet for shade. A little higher up, the chestnuts are displaced by wild laburnums bending under their weight of flowers. The graceful branches meet above our heads, sweeping their long tassels against our faces as we ride beneath them, while the air for a good mile is full of fragrance. It is strange to be reminded in this blooming labyrinth of the dusty suburb roads and villa gardens of London. The laburnum is pleasant enough in S. John's Wood or the Regent's Park in May—a tame domesticated thing of brightness amid smoke and dust. But it is another joy to see it flourishing in its own home, clothing acres of the mountain-side in a very splendour of spring-colour, mingling its paler blossoms with the golden broom of our own hills, and with the silver of the hawthorn and wild cherry. Deep beds of lilies-of-the-valley grow everywhere beneath the trees; and in the meadows purple columbines, white asphodels, the Alpine spiræa, tall, with feathery leaves, blue scabious, golden hawkweeds, turkscap lilies, and, better than all, the exquisite narcissus poeticus, with its crimson-tipped cup, and the pure pale lilies of San Bruno, are crowded in a maze of dazzling brightness. Higher up the laburnums disappear, and flaunting crimson peonies gleam here and there upon the rocks, until at length the gentians and white ranunculuses of the higher Alps displace the less hardy flowers of Italy.

About an hour below the summit of the mountain we came upon the inn, a large clean building, with scanty furniture and snowy wooden floors, guiltless of carpets. It is big enough to hold about a hundred guests; and Doctor Pasta, who built it, a native of Mendrisio, was gifted either

with much faith or with a real prophetic instinct.[1] Anyhow he deserves commendation for his spirit of enterprise. As yet the house is little known to English travellers: it is mostly frequented by Italians from Milan, Novara, and other cities of the plain, who call it the Italian Righi, and come to it, as cockneys go to Richmond, for noisy picnic excursions, or at most for a few weeks' *villeggiatura* in the summer heats. When we were there in May the season had scarcely begun, and the only inmates besides ourselves were a large party from Milan, ladies and gentlemen in holiday guise, who came, stayed one night, climbed the peak at sunrise, and departed amid jokes and shouting and half-childish play, very unlike the doings of a similar party in sober England. After that the stillness of nature descended on the mountain, and the sun shone day after day upon that great view which seemed created only for ourselves. And what a view it was! The plain stretching up to the high horizon, where a misty range of pink cirrus-clouds alone marked the line where earth ended and the sky began, was islanded with cities and villages innumerable, basking in the hazy shimmering heat. Milan, seen through the doctor's telescope, displayed its Duomo perfect as a microscopic shell, with all its exquisite fretwork, and Napoleon's arch of triumph surmounted by the four tiny horses, as in a fairy's dream. Far off, long silver lines marked the lazy course of Po and Ticino, while little lakes like Varese and the lower end of Maggiore spread themselves out, connecting the mountains with the plain.

[1] It is but just to Doctor Pasta to remark that the above sentence was written more than ten years ago. Since then he has enlarged and improved his house in many ways, furnished it more luxuriously, made paths through the beechwoods round it, and brought excellent water at a great cost from a spring near the summit of the mountain. A more charming residence from early spring to late autumn can scarcely be discovered.

Five minutes' walk from the hotel brought us to a ridge where the precipice fell suddenly and almost sheer over one arm of Lugano Lake. Sullenly outstretched asleep it lay beneath us, coloured with the tints of fluor-spar, or with the changeful green and azure of a peacock's breast. The depth appeared immeasurable. San Salvadore had receded into insignificance: the houses and churches and villas of Lugano bordered the lake-shore with an uneven line of whiteness. And over all there rested a blue mist of twilight and of haze, contrasting with the clearness of the peaks above. It was sunset when we first came here; and, wave beyond wave, the purple Italian hills tossed their crested summits to the foot of a range of stormy clouds that shrouded the high Alps. Behind the clouds was sunset, clear and golden; but the mountains had put on their mantle for the night, and the hem of their garment was all we were to see. And yet—over the edge of the topmost ridge of cloud, what was that long hard line of black, too solid and immovable for cloud, rising into four sharp needles clear and well defined? Surely it must be the familiar outline of Monte Rosa itself, the form which every one who loves the Alps knows well by heart, which picture-lovers know from Ruskin's woodcut in the 'Modern Painters.' For a moment only the vision stayed: then clouds swept over it again, and from the place where the empress of the Alps had been, a pillar of mist shaped like an angel's wing, purple and tipped with gold, shot up against the pale green sky. That cloud-world was a pageant in itself, as grand and more gorgeous perhaps than the mountains would have been. Deep down through the hollows of the Simplon a thunderstorm was driving; and we saw forked flashes once and again, as in a distant world, lighting up the valleys for a moment, and leaving the darkness blacker behind them as the storm blurred out the landscape forty miles away.

Darkness was coming to us too, though our sky was clear and the stars were shining brightly. At our feet the earth was folding itself to sleep; the plain was wholly lost; little islands of white mist had formed themselves, and settled down upon the lakes and on their marshy estuaries; the birds were hushed; the gentian-cups were filling to the brim with dew. Night had descended on the mountain and the plain; the show was over.

The dawn was whitening in the east next morning, when we again scrambled through the dwarf beechwood to the precipice above the lake. Like an ink-blot it lay, unruffled, slumbering sadly. Broad sheets of vapour brooded on the plain, telling of miasma and fever, of which we on the mountain, in the pure cool air, knew nothing. The Alps were all there now—cold, unreal, stretching like a phantom line of snowy peaks, from the sharp pyramids of Monte Viso and the Grivola in the west to the distant Bernina and the Ortler in the east. Supreme among them towered Monte Rosa—queenly, triumphant, gazing down in proud pre-eminence, as she does when seen from any point of the Italian plain. There is no mountain like her. Mont Blanc himself is scarcely so regal; and she seems to know it, for even the clouds sweep humbled round her base, girdling her at most, but leaving her crown clear and free. Now, however, there were no clouds to be seen in all the sky. The mountains had a strange unshriven look, as if waiting to be blessed. Above them, in the cold grey air, hung a low black arch of shadow, the shadow of the bulk of the huge earth, which still concealed the sun. Slowly, slowly this dark line sank lower, till, one by one, at last, the peaks caught first a pale pink flush; then a sudden golden glory flashed from one to the other, as they leapt joyfully into life. It is a supreme moment this first burst of life and light over the sleeping world, as one can

only see it on rare days and in rare places like the Monte Generoso. The earth—enough of it at least for us to picture to ourselves the whole—lies at our feet; and we feel as the Saviour might have felt, when from the top of that high mountain He beheld the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them. Strangely and solemnly may we image to our fancy the lives that are being lived down in those cities of the plain: how many are waking at this very moment to toil and a painful weariness, to sorrow, or to 'that unrest which men miscall delight;' while we upon our mountain buttress, suspended in mid-heaven and for a while removed from daily cares, are drinking in the beauty of the world that God has made so fair and wonderful. From this same eyrie, only a few years ago, the hostile armies of France, Italy, and Austria might have been watched moving in dim masses across the plains, for the possession of which they were to clash in mortal fight at Solferino and Magenta. All is peaceful now. It is hard to picture the waving cornfields trodden down, the burning villages and ransacked vineyards, all the horrors of real war to which that fertile plain has been so often the prey. But now these memories of

> Old, unhappy, far-off things,
> And battles long ago,

do but add a calm and beauty to the radiant scene that lies before us. And the thoughts which it suggests, the images with which it stores our mind, are not without their noblest uses. The glory of the world sinks deeper into our shallow souls than we well know; and the spirit of its splendour is always ready to revisit us on dark and dreary days at home with an unspeakable refreshment. Even as I write, I seem to see the golden glow sweeping in broad waves over the purple hills nearer and nearer, till the lake brightens at our

feet, and the windows of Lugano flash with sunlight, and little boats creep forth across the water like spiders on a pond, leaving an arrowy track of light upon the green behind them, while Monte Salvadore with its tiny chapel and a patch of the further landscape are still kept in darkness by the shadow of the Generoso itself. The birds wake into song as the sun's light comes; cuckoo answers cuckoo from ridge to ridge; dogs bark; and even the sounds of human life rise up to us: children's voices and the murmurs of the market-place ascending faintly from the many villages hidden among the chestnut-trees beneath our feet; while the creaking of a cart we can but just see slowly crawling along the straight road by the lake, is heard at intervals.

The full beauty of the sunrise is but brief. Already the low lakelike mists we saw last night have risen and spread, and shaken themselves out into masses of summer clouds, which, floating upward, threaten to envelop us upon our vantage-ground. Meanwhile they form a changeful sea below, blotting out the plain, surging up into the valleys with the movement of a billowy tide, attacking the lower heights like the advance-guard of a besieging army, but daring not as yet to invade the cold and solemn solitudes of the snowy Alps. These, too, in time, when the sun's heat has grown strongest, will be folded in their midday pall of sheltering vapour.

The very summit of Monte Generoso must not be left without a word of notice. The path to it is as easy as the sheep-walks on an English down, though cut along grass-slopes descending at a perilously sharp angle. At the top the view is much the same, as far as the grand features go, as that which is commanded from the cliff by the hotel. But the rocks here are crowded with rare Alpine flowers—delicate golden auriculas with powdery leaves and

stems, pale yellow cowslips, imperial purple saxifrages, soldanellas at the edge of lingering patches of the winter snow, blue gentians, crocuses, and the frail, rosy-tipped ranunculus, called glacialis. Their blooming time is brief. When summer comes the mountain will be bare and burned, like all Italian hills. The Generoso is a very dry mountain, silent and solemn from its want of streams. There is no sound of falling waters on its crags; no musical rivulets flow down its sides, led carefully along the slopes, as in Switzerland, by the peasants, to keep their hay-crops green and gladden the thirsty turf throughout the heat and drought of summer. The soil is a Jurassic limestone: the rain penetrates the porous rock, and sinks through cracks and fissures, to reappear above the base of the mountain in a full-grown stream. This is a defect in the Generoso, as much to be regretted as the want of shade upon its higher pastures. Here, as elsewhere in Piedmont, the forests are cut for charcoal; the beech-scrub, which covers large tracts of the hills, never having the chance of growing into trees much higher than a man. It is this which makes an Italian mountain at a distance look woolly, like a sheep's back. Among the brushwood, however, lilies-of-the-valley and Solomon's seals delight to grow; and the league-long beds of wild strawberries prove that when the laburnums have faded, the mountain will become a garden of feasting.

It was on the crest of Monte Generoso, late one afternoon in May, that we saw a sight of great beauty. The sun had yet about an hour before it sank behind the peaks of Monte Rosa, and the sky was clear, except for a few white clouds that floated across the plain of Lombardy. Then as we sat upon the crags, tufted with soldanellas and auriculas, we could see a fleecy vapour gliding upward from the hollows of the mountain, very thin and pale, yet dense enough to blot the

landscape to the south and east from sight. It rose with an imperceptible motion, as the Oceanides might have soared from the sea to comfort Prometheus in the tragedy of Æschylus. Already the sun had touched its upper edge with gold, and we were expecting to be enveloped in a mist; when suddenly upon the outspread sheet before us there appeared two forms, larger than life, yet not gigantic, surrounded with haloes of such tempered iridescence as the moon half hidden by a summer cloud is wont to make. They were the glorified figures of ourselves; and what we did, the phantoms mocked, rising or bowing, or spreading wide their arms. Some scarce-felt breeze prevented the vapour from passing across the ridge to westward, though it still rose from beneath, and kept fading away into thin air above our heads. Therefore the vision lasted as long as the sun stayed yet above the Alps; and the images with their aureoles shrank and dilated with the undulations of the mist. I could not but think of that old formula for an anthropomorphic Deity—'the Brocken-spectre of the human spirit projected on the mists of the Non-ego.' Even like those cloud-phantoms are the gods made in the image of man, who have been worshipped through successive ages of the world, gods dowered with like passions to those of the races who have crouched before them, gods cruel and malignant and lustful, jealous and noble and just, radiant or gloomy, the counterparts of men upon a vast and shadowy scale. But here another question rose. If the gods that men have made and ignorantly worshipped be really but glorified copies of their own souls, where is the sun in this parallel? Without the sun's rays the mists of Monte Generoso could have shown no shadowy forms. Without some other power than the mind of man, could men have fashioned for them-

selves those ideals that they named their gods? Unseen by Greek, or Norseman, or Hindoo, the potent force by which alone they could externalise their image, existed outside them, independent of their thought. Nor does the trite epigram touch the surface of the real mystery. The sun, the human beings on the mountain, and the mists are all parts of one material universe: the transient phenomenon we witnessed was but the effect of a chance combination. Is, then, the anthropomorphic God as momentary and as accidental in the system of the world as that vapoury spectre? The God in whom we live and move and have our being must be far more all-pervasive, more incognisable by the souls of men, who doubt not for one moment of His presence and His power. Except for purposes of rhetoric the metaphor that seemed so clever fails. Nor, when once such thoughts have been stirred in us by such a sight, can we do better than repeat Goethe's sublime profession of a philosophic mysticism. This translation I made one morning on the Pasterze Gletscher beneath the spires of the Gross Glockner:—

To Him who from eternity, self-stirred,
Himself hath made by His creative word!
To Him, supreme, who causeth Faith to be,
Trust, Hope, Love, Power, and endless Energy!
To Him, who, seek to name Him as we will,
Unknown within Himself abideth still!

Strain ear and eye, till sight and sense be dim;
Thou'lt find but faint similitudes of Him:
Yea, and thy spirit in her flight of flame
Still strives to gauge the symbol and the name:
Charmed and compelled thou climb'st from height to height,
And round thy path the world shines wondrous bright;
Time, Space, and Size, and Distance cease to be,
And every step is fresh infinity.

What were the God who sat outside to scan
The spheres that 'neath His finger circling ran?
God dwells within, and moves the world and moulds,
Himself and Nature in one form enfolds:
Thus all that lives in Him and breathes and is,
Shall ne'er His puissance, ne'er His spirit miss.

The soul of man, too, is an universe:
Whence follows it that race with race concurs
In naming all it knows of good and true
God,—yea, its own God; and with homage due
Surrenders to His sway both earth and heaven;
Fears Him, and loves, where place for love is given.

LOMBARD VIGNETTES

On the Superga

This is the chord of Lombard colouring in May. Lowest in the scale: bright green of varied tints, the meadow-grasses mingling with willows and acacias, harmonised by air and distance. Next, opaque blue—the blue of something between amethyst and lapis-lazuli—that belongs alone to the basements of Italian mountains. Higher, the roseate whiteness of ridged snow on Alps or Apennines. Highest, the blue of the sky, ascending from pale turquoise to transparent sapphire filled with light. A mediæval mystic might have likened this chord to the spiritual world. For the lowest region is that of natural life, of plant and bird and beast, and unregenerate man; it is the place of faun and nymph and satyr, the plain where wars are fought and cities built, and work is done. Thence we climb to purified humanity, the mountains of purgation, the solitude and simplicity of contemplative life not yet made perfect by freedom from the flesh. Higher comes that thin white belt, where are the resting places of angelic feet, the points whence purged souls take their flight toward infinity. Above all is heaven, the hierarchies ascending row on row to reach the light of God.

This fancy occurred to me as I climbed the slope of the Superga, gazing over acacia hedges and poplars to the mountains bare in morning light. The occasional occurrence of

bars across this chord—poplars shivering in sun and breeze, stationary cypresses as black as night, and tall campanili with the hot red shafts of glowing brick—adds just enough of composition to the landscape. Without too much straining of the allegory, the mystic might have recognised in these aspiring bars the upward effort of souls rooted in the common life of earth.

The panorama, unrolling as we ascend, is enough to overpower a lover of beauty. There is nothing equal to it for space and breadth and majesty. Monte Rosa, the masses of Mont Blanc blent with the Grand Paradis, the airy pyramid of Monte Viso, these are the battlements of that vast Alpine rampart, in which the vale of Susa opens like a gate. To west and south sweep the Maritime Alps and the Apennines. Beneath, glides the infant Po; and where he leads our eyes, the plain is only limited by pearly mist.

A Bronze Bust of Caligula at Turin

The Albertina bronze is one of the most precious portraits of antiquity, not merely because it confirms the testimony of the green basalt bust in the Capitol, but also because it supplies an even more emphatic and impressive illustration to the narrative of Suetonius.

Caligula is here represented as young and singularly beautiful. It is indeed an ideal Roman head, with the powerful square modelling, the crisp short hair, low forehead and regular firm features, proper to the noblest Roman type. The head is thrown backward from the throat; and there is a something of menace or defiance or suffering in the suggestion of brusque movement given to the sinews of the neck. This attitude, together with the tension of the forehead, and the fixed expression of pain and strain communicated by the

lines of the mouth—strong muscles of the upper lip and abruptly chiselled under lip—in relation to the small eyes, deep set beneath their cavernous and level brows, renders the whole face a monument of spiritual anguish. I remember that the green basalt bust of the Capitol has the same anxious forehead, the same troubled and overburdened eyes; but the agony of this fretful mouth, comparable to nothing but the mouth of Pandolfo Sigismondo Malatesta, and, like that, on the verge of breaking into the spasms of delirium, is quite peculiar to the Albertina bronze. It is just this which the portrait of the Capitol lacks for the completion of Caligula. The man who could be so represented in art had nothing wholly vulgar in him. The brutality of Caracalla, the overblown sensuality of Nero, the effeminacy of Commodus or Heliogabalus, are all absent here. This face idealises the torture of a morbid soul. It is withal so truly beautiful that it might easily be made the poem of high suffering or noble passion. If the bronze were plastic, I see how a great sculptor, by but few strokes, could convert it into an agonising Stephen or Sebastian. As it is, the unimaginable touch of disease, the unrest of madness, made Caligula the genius of insatiable appetite; and his martyrdom was the torment of lust and ennui and everlasting agitation. The accident of empire tantalised him with vain hopes of satisfying the Charybdis of his soul's sick cravings. From point to point he passed of empty pleasure and unsatisfying cruelty, for ever hungry; until the malady of his spirit, unrestrained by any limitations, and with the right medium for its development, became unique—the tragic type of pathological desire. What more than all things must have plagued a man with that face was probably the unavoidable meanness of his career. When we study the chapters of Suetonius, we are forced to feel that, though the situation and the madness of Caligula

were dramatically impressive, his crimes were trivial and small. In spite of the vast scale on which he worked his devilish will, his life presents a total picture of sordid vice, differing only from pot-house dissipation and schoolboy cruelty in point of size. And this of a truth is the Nemesis of evil. After a time, mere tyrannous caprice must become commonplace and cloying, tedious to the tyrant, and uninteresting to the student of humanity: nor can I believe that Caligula failed to perceive this to his own infinite disgust.

Suetonius asserts that he was hideously ugly. How are we to square this testimony with the witness of the bronze before us? What changed the face, so beautiful and terrible in youth, to ugliness that shrank from sight in manhood? Did the murderers find it blurred in its fine lineaments, furrowed with lines of care, hollowed with the soul's hunger? Unless a life of vice and madness had succeeded in making Caligula's face what the faces of some maniacs are—the bloated ruin of what was once a living witness to the soul within—I could fancy that death may have sanctified it with even more beauty than this bust of the self-tormented young man shows. Have we not all seen the anguish of thought-fretted faces smoothed out by the hands of the Deliverer?

Ferrari at Vercelli

It is possible that many visitors to the Cathedral of Como have carried away the memory of stately women with abundant yellow hair and draperies of green and crimson, in a picture they connect thereafter with Gaudenzio Ferrari. And when they come to Milan, they are probably both impressed and disappointed by a Martyrdom of S. Catherine in the Brera, bearing the same artist's name. If they wish to understand this painter, they must seek him at Varallo, at

Saronno, and at Vercelli. In the Church of S. Cristoforo in Vercelli, Gaudenzio Ferrari at the full height of his powers showed what he could do to justify Lomazzo's title chosen for him of the Eagle. He has indeed the strong wing and the swiftness of the king of birds. And yet the works of few really great painters—and among the really great we place Ferrari—leave upon the mind a more distressing sense of imperfection. Extraordinary fertility of fancy, vehement dramatic passion, sincere study of nature, and great command of technical resources are here (as elsewhere in Ferrari's frescoes) neutralised by an incurable defect of the combining and harmonising faculty, so essential to a masterpiece. There is stuff enough of thought and vigour and imagination to make a dozen artists. And yet we turn away disappointed from the crowded, dazzling, stupefying wilderness of forms and faces on these mighty walls.

All that Ferrari derived from actual life—the heads of single figures, the powerful movement of men and women in excited action, the monumental pose of two praying nuns—is admirably rendered. His angels too, in S. Cristoforo as elsewhere, are quite original; not only in their type of beauty, which is terrestrial and peculiar to Ferrari, without a touch of Correggio's sensuality; but also in the intensity of their emotion, the realisation of their vitality. Those which hover round the Cross in the fresco of the 'Crucifixion' are as passionate as any angels of the Giottesque masters in Assisi. Those again which crowd the Stable of Bethlehem in the 'Nativity' yield no point of idyllic charm to Gozzoli's in the Riccardi Chapel.

The 'Crucifixion' and the 'Assumption of Madonna' are very tall and narrow compositions, audacious in their attempt to fill almost unmanageable space with a connected action. Of the two frescoes the 'Crucifixion,' which has points of

strong similarity to the same subject at Varallo, is by far the best. Ferrari never painted anything at once truer to life and nobler in tragic style than the fainting Virgin. Her face expresses the very acme of martyrdom—not exaggerated nor spasmodic, but real and sublime—in the suffering of a stately matron. In points like this Ferrari cannot be surpassed. Raphael could scarcely have done better; besides, there is an air of sincerity, a stamp of popular truth, in this episode, which lies beyond Raphael's sphere. It reminds us rather of Tintoretto.

After the 'Crucifixion,' I place the 'Adoration of the Magi,' full of fine mundane motives and gorgeous costumes; then the 'Sposalizio' (whose marriage, I am not certain), the only grandly composed picture of the series, and marked by noble heads; then the 'Adoration of the Shepherds,' with two lovely angels holding the bambino. The 'Assumption of the Magdalen'—for which fresco there is a valuable cartoon in the Albertina Collection at Turin—must have been a fine picture; but it is ruined now. An oil altar-piece in the choir of the same church struck me less than the frescoes. It represents Madonna and a crowd of saints under an orchard of apple-trees, with cherubs curiously flung about almost at random in the air. The motive of the orchard is prettily conceived and carried out with spirit.

What Ferrari possessed was rapidity of movement, fulness and richness of reality, exuberance of invention, excellent portraiture, dramatic vehemence, and an almost unrivalled sympathy with the swift and passionate world of angels. What he lacked was power of composition, simplicity of total effect, harmony in colouring, control over his own luxuriance, the sense of tranquillity. He seems to have sought grandeur in size and multitude, richness, éclat, contrast. Being the

disciple of Lionardo and Raphael, his defects are truly singular. As a composer, the old leaven of Giovenone remained in him; but he felt the dramatic tendencies of a later age, and in occasional episodes he realised them with a force and *furia* granted to very few of the Italian painters.

Lanini at Vercelli

The Casa Mariano is a palace which belonged to a family of that name. Like many houses of the sort in Italy, it fell to vile uses; and its hall of audience was turned into a lumber-room. The Operai of Vercelli, I was told, bought the palace a few years ago, restored the noble hall, and devoted a smaller room to a collection of pictures valuable for students of the early Vercellese style of painting. Of these there is no need to speak. The great hall is the gem of the Casa Mariano. It has a coved roof, with a large flat oblong space in the centre of the ceiling. The whole of this vault and the lunettes beneath were painted by Lanini; so runs the tradition of the fresco-painter's name; and though much injured by centuries of outrage, and somewhat marred by recent restoration, these frescoes form a precious monument of Lombard art. The object of the painter's design seems to have been the glorification of Music. In the central compartment of the roof is an assembly of the gods, obviously borrowed from Raphael's 'Marriage of Cupid and Psyche' in the Farnesina at Rome. The fusion of Roman composition with Lombard execution constitutes the chief charm of this singular work, and makes it, so far as I am aware, unique. Single figures of the goddesses, and the whole movement of the scene upon Olympus, are transcribed without attempt at concealment. And yet the fresco is not a barefaced copy.

The manner of feeling and of execution is quite different from that of Raphael's school. The poetry and sentiment are genuinely Lombard. None of Raphael's pupils could have carried out his design with a delicacy of emotion and a technical skill in colouring so consummate. What, we think, as we gaze upward, would the Master have given for such a craftsman? The hardness, coarseness, and animal crudity of the Roman School are absent: so also is their vigour. But where the grace of form and colour is so soft and sweet, where the high-bred calm of good company is so sympathetically rendered, where the atmosphere of amorous languor and of melody is so artistically diffused, we cannot miss the powerful modelling and rather vulgar *tours de force* of Giulio Romano. The scale of tone is silvery golden. There are no hard blues, no coarse red flesh-tints, no black shadows. Mellow lights, the morning hues of primrose, or of palest amber, pervade the whole society. It is a court of gentle and harmonious souls; and though this style of beauty might cloy, at first sight there is something ravishing in those yellow-haired white-limbed, blooming deities. No movement of lascivious grace as in Correggio, no perturbation of the senses as in some of the Venetians, disturbs the rhythm of their music; nor is the pleasure of the flesh, though felt by the painter and communicated to the spectator, an interruption to their divine calm. The white, saffron-haired goddesses are grouped together like stars seen in the topaz light of evening, like daffodils half smothered in snowdrops, and among them, Diana, with the crescent on her forehead, is the fairest. Her dream-like beauty need fear no comparison with the Diana of the Camera di S. Paolo. Apollo and Bacchus are scarcely less lovely in their bloom of earliest manhood; honey-pale, as Greeks would say; like statues of living electron; realising Simaetha's picture of her lover and his friend:—

τοῖς δ' ἦν ξανθοτέρα μὲν ἐλιχρύσοιο γενειάς,
στήθεα δὲ στίλβοντα πολὺ πλέον ἢ τὺ Σελάνα.[1]

It was thus that the almost childlike spirit of the Milanese painters felt the antique: how differently from their Roman brethren! It was thus that they interpreted the lines of their own poets:—

E i tuoi capei più volte ho somigliati
Di Cerere a le paglie secche o bionde
Dintorno crespi al tuo capo legati.[2]

Yet the painter of this hall—whether we are to call him Lanini or another—was not a composer. Where he has not robbed the motives and the distribution of the figures from Raphael, he has nothing left but grace of detail. The intellectual feebleness of his style may be seen in many figures of women playing upon instruments of music, ranged around the walls. One girl at the organ is graceful; another with a tambourine has a sort of Bassarid beauty. But the group of Apollo, Pegasus, and a Muse upon Parnassus, is a failure in its meaningless frigidity, while few of these subordinate compositions show power of conception or vigour of design.

Lanini, like Sodoma, was a native of Vercelli; and though he was Ferrari's pupil, there is more in him of Luini or of Sodoma than of his master. He does not rise at any point to the height of these three great masters, but he shares some of Luini's and Sodoma's fine qualities, without having any of Ferrari's force. A visit to the mangled remnants of his frescoes in S. Caterina will repay the student of art. This was once, apparently, a double church, or a church with the hall and chapel of a *confraternità* appended to it. One

[1] 'The down upon their cheeks and chin was yellower than helichrysus, and their breasts gleamed whiter far than thou, O Moon.'

[2] 'Thy tresses have I oftentimes compared to Ceres' yellow autumn sheaves, wreathed in curled bands around thy head.'

portion of the building was painted with the history of the Saint; and very lovely must this work have been, to judge by the fragments which have recently been rescued from whitewash, damp, and ruthless mutilation. What wonderful Lombard faces, half obliterated on the broken wall and mouldering plaster, smile upon us like drowned memories swimming up from the depths of oblivion! Wherever three or four are grouped together, we find an exquisite little picture—an old woman and two young women in a doorway, for example, telling no story, but touching us with simple harmony of form. Nothing further is needed to render their grace intelligible. Indeed, knowing the faults of the school, we may seek some consolation by telling ourselves that these incomplete fragments yield Lanini's best. In the coved compartments of the roof, above the windows, ran a row of dancing boys; and these are still most beautifully modelled, though the pallor of recent whitewash is upon them. All the boys have blonde hair. They are naked, with scrolls or ribbons wreathed around them, adding to the airiness of their continual dance. Some of the loveliest are in a room used to stow away the lumber of the church—old boards and curtains, broken lanterns, candle-ends in tin sconces, the musty apparatus of festival adornments, and in the midst of all a battered, weather-beaten bier.

The Piazza of Piacenza

The great feature of Piacenza is its famous piazza—romantically, picturesquely perfect square, surpassing the most daring attempts of the scene-painter, and realising a poet's dreams. The space is considerable, and many streets converge upon it at irregular angles. Its finest architectural feature is the antique Palace of the Commune: Gothic

arcades of stone below, surmounted by a brick building with wonderfully delicate and varied terra-cotta work in the round-arched windows. Before this façade, on the marble pavement, prance the bronze equestrian statues of two Farnesi —insignificant men, exaggerated horses, flying drapery—as *barocco* as it is possible to be in style, but so splendidly toned with verdigris, so superb in their *bravura* attitude, and so happily placed in the line of two streets lending far vistas from the square into the town beyond, that it is difficult to criticise them seriously. They form, indeed, an important element in the pictorial effect, and enhance the terra-cotta work of the façade by the contrast of their colour.

The time to see this square is in evening twilight—that wonderful hour after sunset—when the people are strolling on the pavement, polished to a mirror by the pacing of successive centuries, and when the cavalry soldiers group themselves at the angles under the lamp-posts or beneath the dimly lighted Gothic arches of the Palace. This is the magical mellow hour to be sought by lovers of the picturesque in all the towns of Italy, the hour which, by its tender blendings of sallow western lights with glimmering lamps, casts the veil of half shadow over any crudeness and restores the injuries of Time; the hour when all the tints of these old buildings are intensified, etherealised, and harmonised by one pervasive glow. When I last saw Piacenza, it had been raining all day; and ere sundown a clearing had come from the Alps, followed by fresh threatenings of thunderstorms. The air was very liquid. There was a tract of yellow sunset sky to westward, a faint new moon half swathed in mist above, and over all the north a huge towered thundercloud kept flashing distant lightnings. The pallid primrose of the West, forced down and reflected back from that vast bank of tempest, gave unearthly beauty to the hues of church and

palace—tender half-tones of violet and russet paling into greys and yellows on what in daylight seemed but dull red brick. Even the uncompromising façade of S. Francesco helped; and the Dukes were like statues of the 'Gran Commendatore,' waiting for Don Giovanni's invitation.

Masolino at Castiglione d'Olona

Through the loveliest Arcadian scenery of woods and fields and rushing waters the road leads downward from Varese to Castiglione. The Collegiate Church stands on a leafy hill above the town, with fair prospect over groves and waterfalls and distant mountains. Here in the choir is a series of frescoes by Masolino da Panicale, the master of Masaccio, who painted them about the year 1428. 'Masolinus de Florentia pinxit' decides their authorship. The histories of the Virgin, S. Stephen and S. Lawrence, are represented: but the injuries of time and neglect have been so great that it is difficult to judge them fairly. All we feel for certain is that Masolino had not yet escaped from the traditional Giottesque mannerism. Only a group of Jews stoning Stephen, and Lawrence before the tribunal, remind us by dramatic energy of the Brancacci Chapel.

The Baptistery frescoes, dealing with the legend of S. John, show a remarkable advance; and they are luckily in better preservation. A soldier lifting his two-handed sword to strike off the Baptist's head is a vigorous figure, full of Florentine realism. Also in the Baptism in Jordan we are reminded of Masaccio by an excellent group of bathers—one man taking off his hose, another putting them on again, a third standing naked with his back turned, and a fourth shivering half-dressed with a look of curious sadness on his face. The nude has been carefully studied and well realised.

The finest composition of this series is a large panel representing a double action—Salome at Herod's table begging for the Baptist's head, and then presenting it to her mother Herodias. The costumes are quattrocento Florentine, exactly rendered. Salome is a graceful slender creature; the two women who regard her offering to Herodias with mingled curiosity and horror, are well conceived. The background consists of a mountain landscape in Masaccio's simple manner, a rich Renaissance villa, and an open loggia. The architecture perspective is scientifically accurate, and a frieze of boys with garlands on the villa is in the best manner of Florentine sculpture. On the mountain side, diminished in scale, is a group of elders, burying the body of S. John. These are massed together and robed in the style of Masaccio, and have his virile dignity of form and action. Indeed this interesting wall-painting furnishes an epitome of Florentine art, in its intentions and achievements, during the first half of the fifteenth century. The colour is strong and brilliant, and the execution solid.

The margin of the Salome panel has been used for scratching the Chronicle of Castiglione. I read one date, 1568, several of the next century, the record of a duel between two gentlemen, and many inscriptions to this effect, 'Erodiana Regina,' 'Omnia praetereunt,' &c. A dirty one-eyed fellow keeps the place. In my presence he swept the frescoes over with a scratchy broom, flaying their upper surface in profound unconsciousness of mischief. The armour of the executioner has had its steel colours almost rubbed off by this infernal process. Damp and cobwebs are far kinder.

The Certosa

The Certosa of Pavia leaves upon the mind an impression of bewildering sumptuousness: nowhere else are costly materials so combined with a lavish expenditure of the rarest art. Those who have only once been driven round together with the crew of sightseers, can carry little away but the memory of lapis-lazuli and bronze-work, inlaid agates and labyrinthine sculpture, cloisters tenantless in silence, fair painted faces smiling from dark corners on the senseless crowd, trim gardens with rows of pink primroses in spring, and of begonia in autumn, blooming beneath colonnades of glowing terra-cotta. The striking contrast between the Gothic of the interior and the Renaissance façade, each in its own kind perfect, will also be remembered; and thoughts of the two great houses, Visconti and Sforza, to whose pride of power it is a monument, may be blended with the recollection of art-treasures alien to their spirit.

Two great artists, Ambrogio Borgognone and Antonio Amadeo, are the presiding genii of the Certosa. To minute criticism, based upon the accurate investigation of records and the comparison of styles, must be left the task of separating their work from that of numerous collaborators. But it is none the less certain that the keynote of the whole music is struck by them. Amadeo, the master of the Colleoni chapel at Bergamo, was both sculptor and architect. If the façade of the Certosa be not absolutely his creation, he had a hand in the distribution of its masses and the detail of its ornaments. The only fault in this otherwise faultless product of the purest quattrocento inspiration, is that the façade is a frontispiece, with hardly any structural relation to the church it masks: and this, though serious from the point of view of

architecture, is no abatement of its sculpturesque and picturesque refinement. At first sight it seems a wilderness of loveliest reliefs and statues—of angel faces, fluttering raiment, flowing hair, love-laden youths, and stationary figures of grave saints, mid wayward tangles of acanthus and wild vine and cupid-laden foliage; but the subordination of these decorative details to the main design, clear, rhythmical, and lucid, like a chaunt of Pergolese or Stradella, will enrapture one who has the sense for unity evoked from divers elements, for thought subduing all caprices to the harmony of beauty. It is not possible elsewhere in Italy to find the instinct of the earlier Renaissance, so amorous in its expenditure of rare material, so lavish in its bestowal of the costliest workmanship on ornamental episodes, brought into truer keeping with a pure and simple structural effect.

All the great sculptor-architects of Lombardy worked in succession on this miracle of beauty; and this may account for the sustained perfection of style, which nowhere suffers from the languor of exhaustion in the artist or from repetition of motives. It remains the triumph of North Italian genius, exhibiting qualities of tenderness and self-abandonment to inspiration, which we lack in the severer masterpieces of the Tuscan school.

To Borgognone is assigned the painting of the roof in nave and choir—exceeding rich, varied, and withal in sympathy with stately Gothic style. Borgognone again is said to have designed the saints and martyrs worked in *tarsia* for the choir-stalls. His frescoes are in some parts well preserved, as in the lovely little Madonna at the end of the south chapel, while the great fresco above the window in the south transept has an historical value that renders it interesting in spite of partial decay. Borgognone's oil pictures throughout the church prove, if such proof were needed after

inspection of the altar-piece in our National Gallery, that he was one of the most powerful and original painters of Italy, blending the repose of the earlier masters and their consummate workmanship with a profound sensibility to the finest shades of feeling and the rarest forms of natural beauty. He selected an exquisite type of face for his young men and women; on his old men he bestowed singular gravity and dignity. His saints are a society of strong, pure, restful, earnest souls, in whom the passion of deepest emotion is transfigured by habitual calm. The brown and golden harmonies he loved, are gained without sacrifice of lustre: there is a self-restraint in his colouring which corresponds to the reserve of his emotion; and though a regret sometimes rises in our mind that he should have modelled the light and shade upon his faces with a brusque, unpleasing hardness, their pallor dwells within our memory as something delicately sought if not consummately attained. In a word, Borgognone was a true Lombard of the best time. The very imperfection of his flesh-painting repeats in colour what the greatest Lombard sculptors sought in stone—a sharpness of relief that passes over into angularity. This brusqueness was the counterpoise to tenderness of feeling and intensity of fancy in these northern artists. Of all Borgognone's pictures in the Certosa I should select the altar-piece of S. Siro with S. Lawrence and S. Stephen and two Fathers of the Church, for its fusion of this master's qualities.

The Certosa is a wilderness of lovely workmanship. From Borgognone's majesty we pass into the quiet region of Luini's Christian grace, or mark the influence of Lionardo on that rare Assumption of Madonna by his pupil, Andrea Solari. Like everything touched by the Lionardesque spirit, this great picture was left unfinished: yet Northern Italy has nothing finer to show than the landscape, outspread in its

immeasurable purity of calm, behind the grouped Apostles and the ascendant Mother of Heaven. The feeling of that happy region between the Alps and Lombardy, where there are many waters—*et tacitos sine labe lacus sine murmure rivos*—and where the last spurs of the mountains sink in undulations to the plain, has passed into this azure vista, just as all Umbria is suggested in a twilight background of young Raphael or Perugino.

The portraits of the Dukes of Milan and their families carry us into a very different realm of feeling. Medallions above the doors of sacristy and chancel, stately figures reared aloft beneath gigantic canopies, men and women slumbering with folded hands upon their marble biers—we read in all those sculptured forms a strange record of human restlessness, resolved into the quiet of the tomb. The iniquities of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, *il gran Biscione*, the blood-thirst of Gian Maria, the dark designs of Filippo and his secret vices, Francesco Sforza's treason, Galeazzo Maria's vanities and lusts; their tyrants' dread of thunder and the knife; their awful deaths by pestilence and the assassin's poignard; their selfishness, oppression, cruelty and fraud; the murders of their kinsmen; their labyrinthine plots and acts of broken faith;—all is tranquil now, and we can say to each what Bosola found for the Duchess of Malfi ere her execution:—

> Much you had of land and rent;
> Your length in clay's now competent:
> A long war disturbed your mind;
> Here your perfect peace is signed!

Some of these faces are commonplace, with *bourgeois* cunning written on the heavy features; one is bluff, another stolid, a third bloated, a fourth stately. The sculptors have dealt fairly with all, and not one has the lineaments of utter baseness. To Cristoforo Solari's statues of Lodovico Sforza and

his wife, Beatrice d'Este, the palm of excellence in art and of historical interest must be awarded. Sculpture has rarely been more dignified and true to life than here. The woman with her short clustering curls, the man with his strong face, are resting after that long fever which brought woe to Italy, to Europe a new age, and to the boasted minion of Fortune a slow death in the prison palace of Loches. Attired in ducal robes, they lie in state; and the sculptor has carved the lashes on their eyelids, heavy with death's marmoreal sleep. He at least has passed no judgment on their crimes. Let us too bow and leave their memories to the historian's pen, their spirits to God's mercy.

After all wanderings in this Temple of Art, we return to Antonio Amadeo, to his long-haired seraphs playing on the lutes of Paradise, to his angels of the Passion with their fluttering robes and arms outspread in agony, to his saints and satyrs mingled on pilasters of the marble doorways, his delicate *Lavabo* decorations, and his hymns of piety expressed in noble forms of weeping women and dead Christs. Wherever we may pass, this master-spirit of the Lombard style enthralls attention. His curious treatment of drapery as though it were made of crumpled paper, and his trick of enhancing relief by sharp angles and attenuated limbs, do not detract from his peculiar charm. That is his way, very different from Donatello's, of attaining to the maximum of life and lightness in the stubborn vehicle of stone. Nor do all the riches of the choir—those multitudes of singing angels, those Ascensions and Assumptions, and innumerable basreliefs of gleaming marble moulded into softest wax by mastery of art—distract our eyes from the single round medallion, not larger than a common plate, inscribed by him upon the front of the high altar. Perhaps, if one who loved Amadeo were bidden to point out his masterpiece, he would lead the way at

once to this. The space is small: yet it includes the whole tragedy of the Passion. Christ is lying dead among the women on his mother's lap, and there are pitying angels in the air above. One woman lifts his arm, another makes her breast a pillow for his head. Their agony is hushed, but felt in every limb and feature; and the extremity of suffering is seen in each articulation of the worn and wounded form just taken from the cross. It would be too painful, were not the harmony of art so rare, the interlacing of those many figures in a simple round so exquisite. The noblest tranquillity and the most passionate emotion are here fused in a manner of adorable naturalness.

From the church it is delightful to escape into the cloisters, flooded with sunlight, where the swallows skim, and the brown hawks circle, and the mason bees are at work upon their cells among the carvings. The arcades of the two cloisters are the final triumph of Lombard terra-cotta. The memory fails before such infinite invention, such facility and felicity of execution. Wreaths of cupids gliding round the arches among grape-bunches and bird-haunted foliage of vine; rows of angels, like rising and setting planets, some smiling and some grave, ascending and descending by the Gothic curves; saints stationary on their pedestals, and faces leaning from the rounds above; crowds of cherubs, and courses of stars, and acanthus leaves in woven lines, and ribands incessantly inscribed with Ave Maria! Then, over all, the rich red light and purple shadows of the brick, than which no substance sympathises more completely with the sky of solid blue above, the broad plain space of waving summer grass beneath our feet.

It is now late afternoon, and when evening comes, the train will take us back to Milan. There is yet a little while to rest tired eyes and strained spirits among the willows and

the poplars by the monastery wall. Through that grey-green leafage, young with early spring, the pinnacles of the Certosa leap like flames into the sky. The rice-fields are under water, far and wide, shining like burnished gold beneath the level light now near to sun-down. Frogs are croaking; those persistent frogs, whom the Muses have ordained to sing for aye, in spite of Bion and all tuneful poets dead. We sit and watch the water-snakes, the busy rats, the hundred creatures swarming in the fat well-watered soil. Nightingales here and there, new-comers, tune their timid April song: but, strangest of all sounds in such a place, my comrade from the Grisons jodels forth an Alpine cowherd's melody. *Auf den Alpen droben ist ein herrliches Leben!*

Did the echoes of Gian Galeazzo's convent ever wake to such a tune as this before?

San Maurizio

The student of art in Italy, after mastering the characters of different styles and epochs, finds a final satisfaction in the contemplation of buildings designed and decorated by one master, or by groups of artists interpreting the spirit of a single period. Such supreme monuments of the national genius are not very common, and they are therefore the more precious. Giotto's Chapel at Padua; the Villa Farnesina at Rome, built by Peruzzi and painted in fresco by Raphael and Sodoma; the Palazzo del Te at Mantua, Giulio Romano's masterpiece; the Scuola di San Rocco, illustrating the Venetian Renaissance at its climax, might be cited among the most splendid of these achievements. In the church of the Monastero Maggiore at Milan, dedicated to S. Maurizio, Lombard architecture and fresco-painting may be studied in this rare combination. The monastery itself, one of the

oldest in Milan, formed a retreat for cloistered virgins following the rule of S. Benedict. It may have been founded as early as the tenth century; but its church was rebuilt in the first two decades of the sixteenth, between 1503 and 1519, and was immediately afterwards decorated with frescoes by Luini and his pupils. Gian Giacomo Dolcebono, architect and sculptor, called by his fellow-craftsmen *magistro di taliare pietre*, gave the design, at once simple and harmonious, which was carried out with hardly any deviation from his plan. The church is a long parallelogram, divided into two unequal portions, the first and smaller for the public, the second for the nuns. The walls are pierced with rounded and pilastered windows, ten on each side, four of which belong to the outer and six to the inner section. The dividing wall or septum rises to the point from which the groinings of the roof spring; and round three sides of the whole building, north, east, and south, runs a gallery for the use of the convent. The altars of the inner and outer church are placed against the septum, back to back, with certain differences of structure that need not be described. Simple and severe, S. Maurizio owes its architectural beauty wholly and entirely to purity of line and perfection of proportion. There is a prevailing spirit of repose, a sense of space, fair, lightsome, and adapted to serene moods of the meditative fancy in this building, which is singularly at variance with the religious mysticism and imaginative grandeur of a Gothic edifice. The principal beauty of the church, however, is its tone of colour. Every square inch is covered with fresco or rich woodwork, mellowed by time into that harmony of tints which blends the work of greater and lesser artists in one golden hue of brown. Round the arcades of the convent-loggia run delicate arabesques with faces of fair female saints—Catherine, Agnes, Lucy, Agatha,—gem-like or star-like, gazing from their gallery

upon the church below. The Luinesque smile is on their lips and in their eyes, quiet, refined, as though the emblems of their martyrdom brought back no thought of pain to break the Paradise of rest in which they dwell. There are twenty-six in all, a sisterhood of stainless souls, the lilies of Love's garden planted round Christ's throne. Soldier saints are mingled with them in still smaller rounds above the windows, chosen to illustrate the virtues of an order which renounced the world. To decide whose hand produced these masterpieces of Lombard suavity and grace, or whether more than one, would not be easy. Near the altar we can perhaps trace the style of Bartolommeo Suardi in an Annunciation painted on the spandrils—that heroic style, large and noble, known to us by the chivalrous S. Martin and the glorified Madonna of the Brera frescoes. It is not impossible that the male saints of the loggia may be also his, though a tenderer touch, a something more nearly Lionardesque in its quietude, must be discerned in Lucy and her sisters. The whole of the altar in this inner church belongs to Luini. Were it not for darkness and decay, we should pronounce this series of the Passion in nine great compositions, with saints and martyrs and torch-bearing genii, to be one of his most ambitious and successful efforts. As it is, we can but judge in part; the adolescent beauty of Sebastian, the grave compassion of S. Rocco, the classical perfection of the cupid with lighted tapers, the gracious majesty of women smiling on us sideways from their Lombard eyelids—these remain to haunt our memory, emerging from the shadows of the vault above.

The inner church, as is fitting, excludes all worldly elements. We are in the presence of Christ's agony, relieved and tempered by the sunlight of those beauteous female faces. All is solemn here, still as the convent, pure as the medita-

tions of a novice. We pass the septum, and find ourselves in the outer church appropriated to the laity. Above the high altar the whole wall is covered with Luini's loveliest work, in excellent light and far from ill preserved. The space divides into eight compartments. A Pietà, an Assumption, Saints and Founders of the church, group themselves under the influence of Luini's harmonising colour into one symphonious whole. But the places of distinction are reserved for two great benefactors of the convent, Alessandro de' Bentivogli and his wife, Ippolita Sforza. When the Bentivogli were expelled from Bologna by the Papal forces, Alessandro settled at Milan, where he dwelt, honoured by the Sforzas and allied to them by marriage, till his death in 1532. He was buried in the monastery by the side of his sister Alessandra, a nun of the order. Luini has painted the illustrious exile in his habit as he lived. He is kneeling, as though in ever-during adoration of the altar mystery, attired in a long black senatorial robe trimmed with furs. In his left hand he holds a book; and above his pale, serenely noble face is a little black berretta. Saints attend him, as though attesting to his act of faith. Opposite kneels Ippolita, his wife, the brilliant queen of fashion, the witty leader of society, to whom Bandello dedicated his Novelle, and whom he praised as both incomparably beautiful and singularly learned. Her queenly form is clothed from head to foot in white brocade, slashed and trimmed with gold lace, and on her forehead is a golden circlet. She has the proud port of a princess, the beauty of a woman past her prime but stately, the indescribable dignity of attitude which no one but Luini could have rendered so majestically sweet. In her hand is a book; and she, like Alessandro, has her saintly sponsors, Agnes and Catherine and S. Scolastica.

Few pictures bring the splendid Milanese Court so vividly

before us as these portraits of the Bentivogli: they are, moreover, very precious for the light they throw on what Luini could achieve in the secular style so rarely touched by him. Great, however, as are these frescoes, they are far surpassed both in value and interest by his paintings in the side chapel of S. Catherine. Here more than anywhere else, more even than at Saronno or Lugano, do we feel the true distinction of Luini—his unrivalled excellence as a colourist, his power over pathos, the refinement of his feeling, and the peculiar beauty of his favourite types. The chapel was decorated at the expense of a Milanese advocate, Francesco Besozzi, who died in 1529. It is he who is kneeling, grey-haired and bare-headed, under the protection of S. Catherine of Alexandria, intently gazing at Christ unbound from the scourging pillar. On the other side stand S. Lawrence and S. Stephen, pointing to the Christ and looking at us, as though their lips were framed to say: 'Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow.' Even the soldiers who have done their cruel work, seem softened. They untie the cords tenderly, and support the fainting form, too weak to stand alone. What sadness in the lovely faces of S. Catherine and Lawrence! What divine anguish in the loosened limbs and bending body of Christ; what piety in the adoring old man! All the moods proper to this supreme tragedy of the faith are touched as in some tenor song with low accompaniment of viols; for it was Luini's special province to feel profoundly and to express musically. The very depth of the Passion is there; and yet there is no discord.

Just in proportion to this unique faculty for yielding a melodious representation of the most intense moments of stationary emotion, was his inability to deal with a dramatic subject. The first episode of S. Catherine's execution, when the wheel was broken and the executioners struck by light-

ning, is painted in this chapel without energy and with a lack of composition that betrays the master's indifference to his subject. Far different is the second episode when Catherine is about to be beheaded. The executioner has raised his sword to strike. She, robed in brocade of black and gold, so cut as to display the curve of neck and back, while the bosom is covered, leans her head above her praying hands, and waits the blow in sweetest resignation. Two soldiers stand at some distance in a landscape of hill and meadow; and far up are seen the angels carrying her body to its tomb upon Mount Sinai. I cannot find words or summon courage to describe the beauty of this picture; its atmosphere of holy peace, the dignity of its composition, the golden richness of its colouring. The most tragic situation has here again been alchemised by Luini's magic into a pure idyll, without the loss of power, without the sacrifice of edification.

S. Catherine in this incomparable fresco is a portrait, the history of which so strikingly illustrates the relation of the arts to religion on the one hand, and to life on the other, in the age of the Renaissance, that it cannot be omitted. At the end of his fourth Novella, having related the life of the Contessa di Cellant, Bandello says: 'And so the poor woman was beheaded; such was the end of her unbridled desires; and he who would fain see her painted to the life, let him go to the Church of the Monistero Maggiore, and there will he behold her portrait.' The Contessa di Cellant was the only child of a rich usurer who lived at Casal Monferrato. Her mother was a Greek; and she was a girl of such exquisite beauty, that, in spite of her low origin, she became the wife of the noble Ermes Visconti in her sixteenth year. He took her to live with him at Milan, where she frequented the house of the Bentivogli, but none other. Her husband told Bandello that he knew her temper better than to let her visit

with the freedom of the Milanese ladies. Upon his death, while she was little more than twenty, she retired to Casale and led a gay life among many lovers. One of these, the Count of Cellant in the Val d'Aosta, became her second husband, conquered by her extraordinary loveliness. They could not, however, agree together. She left him, and established herself at Pavia. Rich with her father's wealth and still of most seductive beauty, she now abandoned herself to a life of profligacy. Three among her lovers must be named: Ardizzino Valperga, Count of Masino; Roberto Sanseverino, of the princely Naples family; and Don Pietro di Cardona, a Sicilian. With each of the two first she quarrelled, and separately besought each to murder the other. They were friends and frustrated her plans by communicating them to one another. The third loved her with the insane passion of a very young man. What she desired, he promised to do blindly; and she bade him murder his two predecessors in her favour. At this time she was living at Milan, where the Duke of Bourbon was acting as viceroy for the Emperor. Don Pietro took twenty-five armed men of his household, and waylaid the Count of Masino, as he was returning with his brother and eight or nine servants, late one night from supper. Both the brothers and the greater part of their suite were killed: but Don Pietro was caught. He revealed the atrocity of his mistress; and she was sent to prison. Incapable of proving her innocence, and prevented from escaping, in spite of 15,000 golden crowns with which she hoped to bribe her jailors, she was finally beheaded. Thus did a vulgar and infamous Messalina, distinguished only by rare beauty, furnish Luini with a S. Catherine for this masterpiece of pious art! The thing seems scarcely credible. Yet Bandello lived in Milan while the Church of S. Maurizio was being painted; nor does he show the slightest sign of

disgust at the discord between the Contessa's life and her artistic presentation in the person of a royal martyr.

A Humanist's Monument

In the Sculpture Gallery of the Brera is preserved a fair white marble tomb, carved by that excellent Lombard sculptor, Agostino Busti. The epitaph runs as follows :—

En Virtutem Mortis nesciam.
Vivet Lancinus Curtius
Sæcula per omnia
Quascunque lustrans oras,
Tantum possunt Camœnæ.

'Look here on Virtue that knows nought of Death!' Lancinus Curtius shall live through all the centuries, and visit every shore of earth. Such power have the Muses.' The time-worn poet reclines, as though sleeping or resting, ready to be waked; his head is covered with flowing hair, and crowned with laurel; it leans upon his left hand. On either side of his couch stand cupids or genii with torches turned to earth. Above is a group of the three Graces, flanked by winged Pegasi. Higher up are throned two Victories with palms, and at the top a naked Fame. We need not ask who was Lancinus Curtius. He is forgotten, and his virtue has not saved him from oblivion; though he strove in his lifetime, *pro virili parte*, for the palm that Busti carved upon his grave. Yet his monument teaches in short compass a deep lesson; and his epitaph sums up the dream which lured the men of Italy in the Renaissance to their doom. We see before us sculptured in this marble the ideal of the humanistic poet-scholar's life: Love, Grace, the Muse, and Nakedness, and Glory. There is not a single intrusive thought derived from Christianity. The end for which the man lived was

Pagan. His hope was earthly fame. Yet his name survives, if this indeed be a survival, not in those winged verses which were to carry him abroad across the earth, but in the marble of a cunning craftsman, scanned now and then by a wandering scholar's eye in the half-darkness of a vault.

The Monument of Gaston de Foix in the Brera

The hero of Ravenna lies stretched upon his back in the hollow of a bier covered with laced drapery; and his head rests on richly ornamented cushions. These decorative accessories, together with the minute work of his scabbard, wrought in the fanciful mannerism of the *cinquecento*, serve to enhance the statuesque simplicity of the young soldier's effigy. The contrast between so much of richness in the merely subordinate details, and this sublime severity of treatment in the person of the hero, is truly and touchingly dramatic. There is a smile as of content in death, upon his face; and the features are exceedingly beautiful—with the beauty of a boy, almost of a woman. The heavy hair is cut straight above the forehead and straight over the shoulders, falling in massive clusters. A delicately sculptured laurel branch is woven into a victor's crown, and laid lightly on the tresses it scarcely seems to clasp. So fragile is this wreath that it does not break the pure outline of the boy-conqueror's head. The armour is quite plain. So is the surcoat. Upon the swelling bust, that seems fit harbour for a hero's heart, there lies the collar of an order composed of cockle-shells; and this is all the ornament given to the figure. The hands are clasped across a sword laid flat upon the breast, and placed between the legs. Upon the chin is a little tuft of hair, parted, and curling either way; for the victor of Ravenna, like the Hermes of Homer, was *πρῶτον ὑπηνήτης*,

'a youth of princely blood, whose beard hath just begun to grow, for whom the season of bloom is in its prime of grace.' The whole statue is the idealisation of *virtù*—that quality so highly prized by the Italians and the ancients, so well fitted for commemoration in the arts. It is the apotheosis of human life resolved into undying memory because of one great deed. It is the supreme portrait in modern times of a young hero, chiselled by artists belonging to a race no longer heroic, but capable of comprehending and expressing the æsthetic charm of heroism. Standing before it, we may say of Gaston what Arrian wrote to Hadrian of Achilles:—'That he was a hero, if hero ever lived, I cannot doubt; for his birth and blood were noble, and he was beautiful, and his spirit was mighty, and he passed in youth's prime away from men.' Italian sculpture, under the condition of the *cinquecento*, had indeed no more congenial theme than this of bravery and beauty, youth and fame, immortal honour and untimely death; nor could any sculptor of death have poetised the theme more thoroughly than Agostino Busti, whose simple instinct, unlike that of Michelangelo, led him to subordinate his own imagination to the pathos of reality.

Saronno

The church of Saronno is a pretty building with a Bramantesque cupola, standing among meadows at some distance from the little town. It is the object of a special cult, which draws pilgrims from the neighbouring countryside; but the concourse is not large enough to load the sanctuary with unnecessary wealth. Everything is very quiet in the holy place, and the offerings of the pious seem to have been only just enough to keep the building and its treasures of art in repair. The church consists of a nave, a

central cupola, a vestibule leading to the choir, the choir itself, and a small tribune behind the choir. No other single building in North Italy can boast so much that is first-rate of the work of Luini and Gaudenzio Ferrari.

The cupola is raised on a sort of drum composed of twelve pieces, perforated with round windows and supported on four massive piers. On the level of the eye are frescoes by Luini of S. Rocco, S. Sebastian, S. Christopher, and S. Antony—by no means in his best style, and inferior to all his other paintings in this church. The Sebastian, for example, shows an effort to vary the traditional treatment of this saint. He is tied in a sprawling attitude to a tree; and little of Luini's special pathos or sense of beauty—the melody of idyllic grace made spiritual—appears in him. These four saints are on the piers. Above are frescoes from the early Bible history by Lanini, painted in continuation of Ferrari's medallions from the story of Adam expelled from Paradise, which fill the space beneath the cupola, leading the eye upward to Ferrari's masterpiece.

The dome itself is crowded with a host of angels singing and playing upon instruments of music. At each of the twelve angles of the drum stands a coryphæus of this celestial choir, full length, with waving drapery. Higher up, the golden-haired, broad-winged, divine creatures are massed together, filling every square inch of the vault with colour. Yet there is no confusion. The simplicity of the selected motive and the necessities of the place acted like a check on Ferrari, who, in spite of his dramatic impulse, could not tell a story coherently or fill a canvas with harmonised variety. There is no trace of his violence here. Though the motion of music runs through the whole multitude like a breeze, though the joy expressed is a real *tripudio celeste*, not one of all these angels flings his arms abroad or makes a movement

that disturbs the rhythm. We feel that they are keeping time and resting quietly, each in his appointed seat, as though the sphere was circling with them round the throne of God, who is their centre and their source of gladness. Unlike Correggio and his imitators, Ferrari has introduced no clouds, and has in no case made the legs of his angels prominent. It is a mass of noble faces and voluminously robed figures, emerging each above the other like flowers in a vase. Each too has specific character, while all are robust and full of life, intent upon the service set them. Their instruments of music are all the lutes and viols, flutes, cymbals, drums, fifes, citherns, organs, and harps that Ferrari's day could show. The scale of colour, as usual with Ferrari, is a little heavy; nor are the tints satisfactorily harmonised. But the vigour and invention of the whole work would atone for minor defects of far greater consequence.

It is natural, beneath this dome, to turn aside and think one moment of Correggio at Parma. Before the *macchinisti* of the seventeenth century had vulgarised the motive, Correggio's bold attempt to paint heaven in flight from earth—earth left behind in the persons of the Apostles standing round the empty tomb, heaven soaring upward with a spiral vortex into the abyss of light above—had an originality which set at nought all criticism. There is such ecstasy of jubilation, such rapturous rapidity of flight, that we who strain our eyes from below, feel we are in the darkness of the grave which Mary left. A kind of controlling rhythm for the composition is gained by placing Gabriel, Madonna, and Christ at three points in the swirl of angels. Nevertheless, composition—the presiding all-controlling intellect—is just what makes itself felt by absence; and Correggio's special qualities of light and colour have now so far vanished from the cupola of the Duomo that the constructive poverty is not disguised. Here,

if anywhere in painting, we may apply Goethe's words—*Gefühl ist Alles.*

If then we return to Ferrari's angels at Saronno, we find that the painter of Varallo chose a safer though a far more modest theme. Nor did he expose himself to that most cruel of all degradations which the ethereal genius of Correggio has suffered from incompetent imitators. To daub a tawdry and superficial reproduction of those Parmese frescoes, to fill the cupolas of Italy with veritable *guazzetti di rane*, was comparatively easy; and between our intelligence and what remains of that stupendous masterpiece of boldness, crowd a thousand memories of such ineptitude. On the other hand, nothing but solid work and conscientious inspiration could enable any workman, however able, to follow Ferrari in the path struck out by him at Saronno. His cupola has had no imitator; and its only rival is the noble pendant painted at Varallo by his own hand, of angels in adoring anguish round the Cross.

In the ante-choir of the sanctuary are Luini's priceless frescoes of the 'Marriage of the Virgin,' and the 'Dispute with the Doctors.'[1] Their execution is flawless, and they are perfectly preserved. If criticism before such admirable examples of so excellent a master be permissible, it may be questioned whether the figures are not too crowded, whether the groups are sufficiently varied and connected by rhythmic lines. Yet the concords of yellow and orange with blue in the 'Sposalizio,' and the blendings of dull violet and red in the 'Disputa,' make up for much of stiffness. Here, as in the Chapel of S. Catherine at Milan, we feel that Luini was the greatest colourist among *frescanti*. In the 'Sposalizio' the female heads are singularly noble and idyllically graceful. Some of the young men too have Luini's special grace and abundance of golden hair. In

[1] Both these and the large frescoes in the choir have been chromolithographed by the Arundel Society.

the 'Disputa' the gravity and dignity of old men are above all things striking.

Passing into the choir, we find on either hand the 'Adoration of the Magi' and the 'Purification of the Virgin,' two of Luini's divinest frescoes. Above them in lunettes are four Evangelists and four Latin Fathers, with four Sibyls. Time and neglect have done no damage here: and here, again, perforce we notice perfect mastery of colour in fresco. The blues detach themselves too much, perhaps, from the rest of the colouring; and that is all a devil's advocate could say. It is possible that the absence of blue makes the S. Catherine frescoes in the Monastero Maggiore at Milan surpass all other works of Luini. But nowhere else has he shown more beauty and variety in detail than here. The group of women led by Joseph, the shepherd carrying the lamb upon his shoulder, the girl with a basket of white doves, the child with an apple on the altar-steps, the lovely youth in the foreground heedless of the scene; all these are idyllic incidents treated with the purest, the serenest, the most spontaneous, the truest, most instinctive sense of beauty. The landscape includes a view of Saronno, and an episodical picture of the 'Flight into Egypt' where a white-robed angel leads the way. All these lovely things are in the 'Purification,' which is dated *Bernardinus Lovinus pinxit*, MDXXV.

The fresco of the 'Magi' is less notable in detail, and in general effect is more spoiled by obtrusive blues. There is, however, one young man of wholly Lionardesque loveliness, whose divine innocence of adolescence, unalloyed by serious thought, unstirred by passions, almost forces a comparison with Sodoma. The only painter who approaches Luini in what may be called the Lombard, to distinguish it from the Venetian idyll, is Sodoma; and the work of his which comes nearest to Luini's masterpieces is the legend of S. Benedict,

at Monte Oliveto, near Siena. Yet Sodoma had not all Luini's innocence or *naïveté*. If he added something slightly humorous which has an indefinite charm, he lacked that freshness as of 'cool, meek-blooded flowers' and boyish voices, which fascinates us in Luini. Sodoma was closer to the earth, and feared not to impregnate what he saw of beauty with the fiercer passions of his nature. If Luini had felt passion, who shall say? It appears nowhere in his work, where life is toned to a religious joyousness. When Shelley compared the poetry of the Theocritean amourists to the perfume of the tuberose, and that of the earlier Greek poets to 'a meadow-gale of June, which mingles the fragrance of all the flowers of the field,' he supplied us with critical images which may not unfairly be used to point the distinction between Sodoma at Monte Oliveto and Luini at Saronno.

The Castello of Ferrara

Is it possible that the patron saints of cities should mould the temper of the people to their own likeness? S. George, the chivalrous, is champion of Ferrara. His is the marble group above the Cathedral porch, so feudal in its mediæval pomp. He and S. Michael are painted in fresco over the south portcullis of the Castle. His lustrous armour gleams with Giorgionesque brilliancy from Dossi's masterpiece in the Pinacoteca. That Ferrara, the only place in Italy where chivalry struck any root, should have had S. George for patron, is at any rate significant.

The best preserved relic of princely feudal life in Italy is this Castello of the Este family, with its sombre moat, chained drawbridges, doleful dungeons, and unnumbered tragedies, each one of which may be compared with Parisina's history. I do not want to dwell on these things now. It is enough to

remember the Castello, built of ruddiest brick, time-mellowed with how many centuries of sun and soft sea-air, as it appeared upon the close of one tempestuous day. Just before evening the rain-clouds parted and the sun flamed out across the misty Lombard plain. The Castello burned like a hero's funeral pyre, and round its high-built turrets swallows circled in the warm blue air. On the moat slept shadows, mixed with flowers of sunset, tossed from pinnacle and gable. Then the sky changed. A roof of thunder-cloud spread overhead with the rapidity of tempest. The dying sun gathered his last strength against it, fretting those steel-blue arches with crimson; and all the fierce light, thrown from vault to vault of cloud, was reflected back as from a shield, and cast in blots and patches on the buildings. The Castle towered up rosy-red and shadowy sombre, enshrined, embosomed in those purple clouds; and momently ran lightning forks like rapiers through the growing mass. Everything around, meanwhile, was quiet in the grass-grown streets. The only sound was a high, clear boy's voice chanting an opera tune.

Petrarch's Tomb at Arqua

The drive from Este along the skirts of the Euganean Hills to Arqua takes one through a country which is tenderly beautiful, because of its contrast between little peaked mountains and the plain. It is not a grand landscape. It lacks all that makes the skirts of Alps and Apennines sublime. Its charm is a certain mystery and repose—an undefined sense of the neighbouring Adriatic, a pervading consciousness of Venice unseen, but felt from far away. From the terraces of Arqua the eye ranges across olive-trees, laurels, and pomegranates on the southern slopes, to the misty level land that melts into the sea, with churches and tall campanili like

gigantic galleys setting sail for fairyland over 'the foam of perilous seas forlorn.' Let a blue-black shadow from a thunder-cloud be cast upon this plain, and let one ray of sunlight strike a solitary bell-tower;—it burns with palest flame of rose against the steely dark, and in its slender shaft and shell-like tint of pink all Venice is foreseen.

The village church of Arqua stands upon one of these terraces, with a full stream of clearest water flowing by. On the little square before the church-door, where the peasants congregate at mass-time—open to the skies with all their stars and storms, girdled by the hills, and within hearing of the vocal stream—is Petrarch's sepulchre. Fit resting-place for what remains to earth of such a poet's clay! It is as though archangels, flying, had carried the marble chest and set it down here on the hillside, to be a sign and sanctuary for after-men. A simple rectilinear coffin, of smooth Verona *mandorlato*, raised on four thick columns, and closed by a heavy cippus-cover. Without emblems, allegories, or lamenting genii, this tomb of the great poet, the great awakener of Europe from mental lethargy, encircled by the hills, beneath the canopy of heaven, is impressive beyond the power of words. Bending here, we feel that Petrarch's own winged thoughts and fancies, eternal and aërial, 'forms more real than living man, nurslings of immortality,' have congregated to be the ever-ministering and irremovable attendants on the shrine of one who, while he lived, was purest spirit in a veil of flesh.

On a Mountain

Milan is shining in sunset on those purple fields; and a score of cities flash back the last red light, which shows each inequality and undulation of Lombardy outspread four thousand feet beneath. Both ranges, Alps and Apennines,

are clear to view; and all the silvery lakes are over-canopied and brought into one picture by flame-litten mists. Monte Rosa lifts her crown of peaks above a belt of clouds into light of living fire. The Mischabelhörner and the Dom rest stationary angel-wings upon the rampart, which at this moment is the wall of heaven. The pyramid of distant Monte Viso burns like solid amethyst far, far away. Mont Cervin beckons to his brother, the gigantic Finsteraarhorn, across tracts of liquid ether. Bells are rising from the villages, now wrapped in gloom, between me and the glimmering lake. A hush of evening silence falls upon the ridges, cliffs, and forests of this billowy hill, ascending into wave-like crests, and toppling with awful chasms over the dark waters of Lugano. It is good to be alone here at this hour. Yet I must rise and go—passing through meadows, where white lilies sleep in silvery drifts, and asphodel is pale with spires of faintest rose, and narcissus dreams of his own beauty, loading the air with fragrance sweet as some love-music of Mozart. These fields want only the white figure of Persephone to make them poems: and in this twilight one might fancy that the queen had left her throne by Pluto's side, to mourn for her dead youth among the flowers uplifted between earth and heaven. Nay, they are poems now, these fields; with that unchanging background of history, romance, and human life—the Lombard plain, against whose violet breadth the blossoms bend their faint heads to the evening air. Downward we hurry, on pathways where the beeches meet, by silent farms, by meadows honey-scented, deep in dew. The columbine stands tall and still on those green slopes of shadowy grass. The nightingale sings now, and now is hushed again. Streams murmur through the darkness, where the growth of trees, heavy with honeysuckle and wild rose, is thickest. Fireflies begin to flit above the growing

corn. At last the plain is reached, and all the skies are tremulous with starlight. Alas, that we should vibrate so obscurely to these harmonies of earth and heaven! The inner finer sense of them seems somehow unattainable—that spiritual touch of soul evoking soul from nature, which should transfigure our dull mood of self into impersonal delight. Man needs to be a mytho-poet at some moments, or, better still, to be a mystic steeped through half-unconsciousness in the vast wonder of the world. Cold and untouched to poetry or piety by scenes that ought to blend the spirit in ourselves with spirit in the world without, we can but wonder how this phantom show of mystery and beauty will pass away from us—how soon—and we be where, see what, use all our sensibilities on aught or nought?

Sic Genius

In the picture-gallery at Modena there is a masterpiece of Dosso Dossi. The frame is old and richly carved; and the painting, bordered by its beautiful dull gold, shines with the lustre of an emerald. In his happy moods Dosso set colour upon canvas, as no other painter out of Venice ever did; and here he is at his happiest. The picture is the portrait of a jester, dressed in courtly clothes and with a feathered cap upon his head. He holds a lamb in his arms, and carries the legend, *Sic Genius*. Behind him is a landscape of exquisite brilliancy and depth. His face is young and handsome. Dosso has made it one most wonderful laugh. Even so perhaps laughed Yorick. Nowhere else have I seen a laugh thus painted: not violent, not loud, although the lips are opened to show teeth of dazzling whiteness;—but fine and delicate, playing over the whole face like a ripple sent up from the depths of the soul within. Who was he? What

does the lamb mean? How should the legend be interpreted? We cannot answer these questions. He may have been the court-fool of Ferrara; and his genius, the spiritual essence of the man, may have inclined him to laugh at all things. That at least is the value he now has for us. He is the portrait of perpetual irony, the spirit of the golden Sixteenth Century which delicately laughed at the whole world of thoughts and things, the quintessence of the poetry of Ariosto, the wit of Berni, all condensed into one incarnation and immortalised by truthfullest art. With the Gaul, the Spaniard, and the German at her gates, and in her cities, and encamped upon her fields, Italy still laughed; and when the voice of conscience sounding through Savonarola asked her why, she only smiled—*Sic Genius*.

One evening in May we rowed from Venice to Torcello, and at sunset broke bread and drank wine together among the rank grasses just outside that ancient church. It was pleasant to sit in the so-called chair of Attila and feel the placid stillness of the place. Then there came lounging by a sturdy young fellow in brown country clothes, with a marvellous old wide-awake upon his head, and across his shoulders a bunch of massive church-keys. In strange contrast to his uncouth garb he flirted a pink Japanese fan, gracefully disposing it to cool his sunburned olive cheeks. This made us look at him. He was not ugly. Nay, there was something of attractive in his face—the smooth-curved chin, the shrewd yet sleepy eyes, and finely cut thin lips—a curious mixture of audacity and meekness blent upon his features. Yet this impression was but the prelude to his smile. When that first dawned, some breath of humour seeming to stir in him unbidden, the true meaning was given to his face. Each feature helped to make a smile that was the very soul's life of the man expressed. I broadened, showing

brilliant teeth, and grew into a noiseless laugh; and then I saw before me Dosso's jester, the type of Shakspere's fools, the life of that wild irony, now rude, now fine, which once delighted Courts. The laughter of the whole world and of all the centuries was silent in his face. What he said need not be repeated. The charm was less in his words than in his personality; for Momus-philosophy lay deep in every look and gesture of the man. The place lent itself to irony: parties of Americans and English parsons, the former agape for any rubbishy old things, the latter learned in the lore of obsolete Church-furniture, had thronged Torcello; and now they were all gone, and the sun had set behind the Alps, while an irreverent stranger drank his wine in Attila's chair, and nature's jester smiled—*Sic Genius*.

When I slept that night I dreamed of an altar-piece in the Temple of Folly. The goddess sat enthroned beneath a canopy hung with bells and corals. On her lap was a beautiful winged smiling genius, who flourished two bright torches. On her left hand stood the man of Modena with his white lamb, a new S. John. On her right stood the man of Torcello with his keys, a new S. Peter. Both were laughing after their all-absorbent, divine, noiseless fashion; and under both was written, *Sic Genius*. Are not all things, even profanity, permissible in dreams?

COMO AND IL MEDEGHINO

To which of the Italian lakes should the palm of beauty be accorded? This question may not unfrequently have moved the idle minds of travellers, wandering through that loveliest region from Orta to Garda—from little Orta, with her gem-like island, rosy granite crags, and chestnut-covered swards above the Colma; to Garda, bluest of all waters, surveyed in majestic length from Desenzano or poetic Sirmione, a silvery sleeping haze of hill and cloud and heaven and clear waves bathed in modulated azure. And between these extreme points what varied lovelinesses lie in broad Maggiore, winding Como, Varese with the laughing face upturned to heaven, Lugano overshadowed by the crested crags of Monte Generoso, and Iseo far withdrawn among the rocky Alps! He who loves immense space, cloud shadows slowly sailing over purple slopes, island gardens, distant glimpses of snow-capped mountains, breadth, air, immensity, and flooding sunlight, will choose Maggiore. But scarcely has he cast his vote for this, the Juno of the divine rivals, when he remembers the triple lovelinesses of the Larian Aphrodite, disclosed in all their placid grace from Villa Serbelloni;—the green blue of the waters, clear as glass, opaque through depth; the *millefleurs* roses clambering into cypresses by Cadenabbia; the laburnums hanging their yellow clusters from the clefts of Sasso Rancio; the oleander arcades of Varenna; the wild white limestone crags of San Martino, which he has climbed to feast his eyes

with the perspective, magical, serene, Lionardesquely perfect, of the distant gates of Adda. Then while this modern Paris is yet doubting, perhaps a thought may cross his mind of sterner, solitary Lake Iseo—the Pallas of the three. She offers her own attractions. The sublimity of Monte Adamello, dominating Lovere and all the lowland like Hesiod's hill of Virtue reared aloft above the plain of common life, has charms to tempt heroic lovers. Nor can Varese be neglected. In some picturesque respects, Varese is the most perfect of the lakes. Those long lines of swelling hills that lead into the level, yield an infinite series of placid foregrounds, pleasant to the eye by contrast with the dominant snow-summits, from Monte Viso to Monte Leone: the sky is limitless to southward; the low horizons are broken by bell-towers and farmhouses; while armaments of clouds are ever rolling in the interval of Alps and plain.

Of a truth, to decide which is the queen of the Italian lakes, is but an *infinita quæstio*; and the mere raising of it is folly. Still each lover of the beautiful may give his vote; and mine, like that of shepherd Paris, is already given to the Larian goddess. Words fail in attempting to set forth charms which have to be enjoyed, or can at best but lightly be touched with most consummate tact, even as great poets have already touched on Como Lake—from Virgil with his 'Lari maxume,' to Tennyson and the Italian Manzoni. The threshold of the shrine is, however, less consecrated ground; and the Cathedral of Como may form a vestibule to the temple where silence is more golden than the speech of a describer.

The Cathedral of Como is perhaps the most perfect building in Italy for illustrating the fusion of Gothic and Renaissance styles, both of a good type and exquisite in their sobriety. The Gothic ends with the nave. The noble transepts and the choir, each terminating in a rounded tribune of the same

dimensions, are carried out in a simple and decorous Bramantesque manner. The transition from the one style to the other is managed so felicitously, and the sympathies between them are so well developed, that there is no discord. What we here call Gothic, is conceived in a truly southern spirit, without fantastic efflorescence or imaginative complexity of multiplied parts; while the Renaissance manner, as applied by Tommaso Rodari, has not yet stiffened into the lifeless neo-Latinism of the later *cinquecento*: it is still distinguished by delicate inventiveness, and beautiful subordination of decorative detail to architectural effect. Under these happy conditions we feel that the Gothic of the nave, with its superior severity and sombreness, dilates into the lucid harmonies of choir and transepts like a flower unfolding. In the one the mind is tuned to inner meditation and religious awe; in the other the worshipper passes into a temple of the clear explicit faith—as an initiated neophyte might be received into the meaning of the mysteries.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire the district of Como seems to have maintained more vividly than the rest of Northern Italy some memory of classic art. *Magistri Comacini* is a title frequently inscribed upon deeds and charters of the earlier middle ages, as synonymous with sculptors and architects. This fact may help to account for the purity and beauty of the Duomo. It is the work of a race in which the tradition of delicate artistic invention had never been wholly interrupted. To Tommaso Rodari and his brothers, Bernardino and Jacopo, the world owes this sympathetic fusion of the Gothic and the Bramantesque styles; and theirs too is the sculpture with which the Duomo is so richly decorated. They were natives of Maroggia, a village near Mendrisio, beneath the crests of Monte Generoso, close to Campione which sent so many able craftsmen out into the

world between the years 1300 and 1500. Indeed the name of Campionesi would probably have been given to the Rodari, had they left their native province for service in Eastern Lombardy. The body of the Duomo had been finished when Tommaso Rodari was appointed master of the fabric in 1487. To complete the work by the addition of a tribune was his duty. He prepared a wooden model and exposed it, after the fashion of those times, for criticism in his *bottega*; and the usual difference of opinion arose among the citizens of Como concerning its merits. Cristoforo Solaro, surnamed Il Gobbo, was called in to advise. It may be remembered that when Michelangelo first placed his Pietà in S. Peter's, rumour gave it to this celebrated Lombard sculptor, and the Florentine was constrained to set his own signature upon the marble. The same Solaro carved the monument of Beatrice Sforza in the Certosa of Pavia. He was indeed in all points competent to criticise or to confirm the design of his fellow-craftsman. Il Gobbo disapproved of the proportions chosen by Rodari, and ordered a new model to be made; but after much discussion, and some concessions on the part of Rodari, who is said to have increased the number of the windows and lightened the orders of his model, the work was finally entrusted to the master of Maroggia.

Not less creditable than the general design of the tribune is the sculpture executed by the brothers. The north side door is a master-work of early Renaissance chiselling, combining mixed Christian and classical motives with a wealth of floral ornament. Inside, over the same door, is a procession of children seeming to represent the Triumph of Bacchus, with perhaps some Christian symbolism. Opposite, above the south door, is a frieze of fighting Tritons—horsed sea deities pounding one another with bunches of fish and splashing the water, in Mantegna's spirit. The doorways of the façade are

decorated with the same rare workmanship ; and the canopies, supported by naked fauns and slender twisted figures, under which the two Plinies are seated, may be reckoned among the supreme achievements of delicate Renaissance sculpture. The Plinies are not like the work of the same master. They are older, stiffer, and more Gothic. The chief interest attaching to them is that they are habited and seated after the fashion of Humanists. This consecration of the two Pagan saints beside the portals of the Christian temple is truly characteristic of the fifteenth century in Italy. Beneath, are little basreliefs representing scenes from their respective lives, in the style of carved predellas on the altars of saints.

The whole church is peopled with detached statues, among which a Sebastian in the Chapel of the Madonna must be mentioned as singularly beautiful. It is a finely modelled figure, with the full life and exuberant adolescence of Venetian inspiration. A peculiar feature of the external architecture is the series of Atlantes, bearing on their shoulders urns, heads of lions, and other devices, and standing on brackets round the upper cornice just below the roof. They are of all sorts ; young and old, male and female ; classically nude, and boldly outlined. These water-conduits, the work of Bernardo Bianco and Francesco Rusca, illustrate the departure of the earlier Renaissance from the Gothic style. They are gargoyles ; but they have lost the grotesque element. At the same time the sculptor, while discarding Gothic tradition, has not betaken himself yet to a servile imitation of the antique. He has used invention, and substituted for grinning dragons' heads something wild and bizarre of his own in harmony with classic taste.

The pictures in the chapels, chiefly by Luini and Ferrari —an idyllic Nativity, with faun-like shepherds and choirs of angels—a sumptuous adoration of the Magi—a jewelled

Sposalizio with abundance of golden hair flowing over draperies of green and crimson—will interest those who are as yet unfamiliar with Lombard painting. Yet their architectural setting, perhaps, is superior to their intrinsic merit as works of art; and their chief value consists in adding rare dim flakes of colour to the cool light of the lovely church. More curious, because less easily matched, is the gilded woodwork above the altar of S. Abondio, attributed to a German carver, but executed for the most part in the purest Luinesque manner. The pose of the enthroned Madonna, the type and gesture of S. Catherine, and the treatment of the Pietà above, are thoroughly Lombard, showing how Luini's ideal of beauty could be expressed in carving. Some of the choicest figures in the Monastero Maggiore at Milan seem to have descended from the walls and stepped into their tabernacles on this altar. Yet the style is not maintained consistently. In the reliefs illustrating the life of S. Abondio we miss Luini's childlike grace, and find instead a something that reminds us of Donatello—a seeking after the classical in dress, carriage, and grouping of accessory figures. It may have been that the carver, recognising Luini's defective composition, and finding nothing in that master's manner adapted to the spirit of relief, had the good taste to render what was Luinesquely lovely in his female figures, and to fall back on a severer model for his basreliefs.

The building-fund for the Duomo was raised in Como and its districts. Boxes were placed in all the churches to receive the alms of those who wished to aid the work. The clergy begged in Lent, and preached the duty of contributing on special days. Presents of lime and bricks and other materials were thankfully received. Bishops, canons, and municipal magistrates were expected to make costly gifts on taking office. Notaries, under penalty of paying 100 soldi if they

neglected their engagement, were obliged to persuade testators, *cum bonis modis dulciter*, to inscribe the Duomo on their wills. Fines for various offences were voted to the building by the city. Each new burgher paid a certain sum; while guilds and farmers of the taxes bought monopolies and privileges at the price of yearly subsidies. A lottery was finally established for the benefit of the fabric. Of course each payment to the good work carried with it spiritual privileges; and so willingly did the people respond to the call of the Church, that during the sixteenth century the sums subscribed amounted to 200,000 golden crowns. Among the most munificent donators are mentioned the Marchese Giacomo Gallio, who bequeathed 290,000 lire, and a Benzi, who gave 10,000 ducats.

While the people of Como were thus straining every nerve to complete a pious work, which at the same time is one of the most perfect masterpieces of Italian art, their lovely lake was turned into a pirate's stronghold, and its green waves stained with slaughter of conflicting navies. So curious is this episode in the history of the Larian lake that it is worth while to treat of it at some length. Moreover, the lives of few captains of adventure offer matter more rich in picturesque details and more illustrative of their times than that of Gian Giacomo de' Medici, the Larian corsair, long known and still remembered as Il Medeghino. He was born in Milan in 1498, at the beginning of that darkest and most disastrous period of Italian history, when the old fabric of social and political existence went to ruin under the impact of conflicting foreign armies. He lived on until the year 1555, witnessing and taking part in the dismemberment of the Milanese Duchy, playing a game of hazard at high stakes for his own profit with the two last Sforzas, the Empire, the French, and the Swiss. At the beginning of the century,

while he was still a youth, the rich valley of the Valtelline, with Bormio and Chiavenna, had been assigned to the Grisons. The Swiss Cantons at the same time had possessed themselves of Lugano and Bellinzona. By these two acts of robbery the mountaineers tore a portion of its fairest territory from the Duchy; and whoever ruled in Milan, whether a Sforza, or a Spanish viceroy, or a French general, was impatient to recover the lost jewel of the ducal crown. So much has to be premised, because the scene of our hero's romantic adventures was laid upon the borderland between the Duchy and the Cantons. Intriguing at one time with the Duke of Milan, at another with his foes the French or Spaniards, Il Medeghino found free scope for his peculiar genius in a guerilla warfare, carried on with the avowed purpose of restoring the Valtelline to Milan. To steer a plain course through that chaos of politics, in which the modern student, aided by the calm clear lights of history and meditation, cannot find a clue, was of course impossible for an adventurer whose one aim was to gratify his passions and exalt himself at the expense of others. It is therefore of little use to seek motives of statecraft or of patriotism in the conduct of Il Medeghino. He was a man shaped according to Machiavelli's standard of political morality—self-reliant, using craft and force with cold indifference to moral ends, bent only upon wringing for himself the largest share of this world's power for men who, like himself, identified virtue with unflinching and immitigable egotism.

Il Medeghino's father was Bernardo de' Medici, a Lombard, who neither claimed nor could have proved cousinship with the great Medicean family of Florence. His mother was Cecilia Serbelloni. The boy was educated in the fashionable humanistic studies, nourishing his young imagination with the tales of Roman heroes. The first exploit by which he

proved his *virtù*, was the murder of a man he hated, at the age of sixteen. This 'virile act of vengeance,' as it was called, brought him into trouble, and forced him to choose the congenial profession of arms. At a time when violence and vigour passed for manliness, a spirited assassination formed the best of introductions to the captains of mixed mercenary troops. Il Medeghino rose in favour with his generals, helped to reinstate Francesco Sforza in his capital, and, returning himself to Milan, inflicted severe vengeance on the enemies who had driven him to exile. It was his ambition, at this early period of his life, to be made governor of the Castle of Musso, on the Lake of Como. While fighting in the neighbourhood, he had observed the unrivalled capacities for defence presented by its site; and some prevision of his future destinies now urged him to acquire it, as the basis for the free marauding life he planned. The headland of Musso lies about halfway between Gravedona and Menaggio, on the right shore of the Lake of Como. Planted on a pedestal of rock, and surmounted by a sheer cliff, there then stood a very ancient tower, commanding this promontory on the side of the land. Between it and the water the Visconti, in more recent days, had built a square fort; and the headland had been further strengthened by the addition of connecting walls and bastions pierced for cannon. Combining precipitous cliffs, strong towers, and easy access from the lake below, this fortress of Musso was exactly the fit station for a pirate. So long as he kept the command of the lake, he had little to fear from land attacks, and had a splendid basis for aggressive operations. Il Medeghino made his request to the Duke of Milan; but the foxlike Sforza would not grant him a plain answer. At length he hinted that if his suitor chose to rid him of a troublesome subject, the noble and popular Astore Visconti, he should receive

Musso for payment. Crimes of bloodshed and treason sat lightly on the adventurer's conscience. In a short time he compassed the young Visconti's death, and claimed his reward. The Duke despatched him thereupon to Musso, with open letters to the governor, commanding him to yield the castle to the bearer. Private advice, also entrusted to Il Medeghino, bade the governor, on the contrary, cut the bearer's throat. The young man, who had the sense to read the Duke's letter, destroyed the secret document, and presented the other, or, as one version of the story goes, forged a ducal order in his own favour.[1] At any rate, the castle was placed in his hands; and affecting to know nothing of the Duke's intended treachery, Il Medeghino took possession of it as a trusted servant of the ducal crown.

As soon as he was settled in his castle, the freebooter devoted all his energies to rendering it still more impregnable by strengthening the walls and breaking the cliffs into more horrid precipices. In this work he was assisted by his numerous friends and followers; for Musso rapidly became, like ancient Rome, an asylum for the ruffians and outlaws of neighbouring provinces. It is even said that his sisters, Clarina and Margherita, rendered efficient aid with manual labour. The mention of Clarina's name justifies a parenthetical side-glance at Il Medeghino's pedigree, which will serve to illustrate the exceptional conditions of Italian society during this age. She was married to the Count Giberto Borromeo, and became the mother of the pious Carlo Borromeo, whose shrine is still adored at Milan in the Duomo. Il Medeghino's brother, Giovan Angelo, rose to the Papacy, assuming the title of Pius IV. Thus this murderous

[1] I cannot see clearly through these transactions, the muddy waters of decadent Italian plot and counterplot being inscrutable to senses assisted by nothing more luminous than mere tradition.

marauder was the brother of a Pope and the uncle of a Saint; and these three persons of one family embraced the various degrees and typified the several characters which flourished with peculiar lustre in Renaissance Italy—the captain of adventure soaked in blood, the churchman unrivalled for intrigue, and the saint aflame with holiest enthusiasm. Il Medeghino was short of stature, but well made and powerful; broad-chested; with a penetrating voice and winning countenance. He dressed simply, like one of his own soldiers; slept but little; was insensible to carnal pleasure; and though he knew how to win the affection of his men by jovial speech, he maintained strict discipline in his little army. In all points he was an ideal bandit chief, never happy unless fighting or planning campaigns, inflexible of purpose, bold and cunning in the execution of his schemes, cruel to his enemies, generous to his followers, sacrificing all considerations, human and divine, to the one aim of his life, self-aggrandisement by force and intrigue. He knew well how to make himself both feared and respected. One instance of his dealing will suffice. A gentleman of Bellano, Polidoro Boldoni, in return to his advances, coldly replied that he cared for neither amity nor relationship with thieves and robbers; whereupon Il Medeghino extirpated his family, almost to a man.

Soon after his settlement in Musso, Il Medeghino, wishing to secure the gratitude of the Duke, his master, began war with the Grisons. From Coire, from the Engadine, and from Davos, the Alpine pikemen were now pouring down to swell the troops of Francis I.; and their road lay through the Lake of Como. Il Medeghino burned all the boats upon the lake, except those which he took into his own service, and thus made himself master of the water passage. He then swept the 'length of lordly Lario' from Colico to Lecco, harrying

the villages upon the shore, and cutting off the bands of journeying Switzers at his pleasure. Not content with this guerilla, he made a descent upon the territory of the Trepievi, and pushed far up towards Chiavenna, forcing the Grisons to recall their troops from the Milanese. These acts of prowess convinced the Duke that he had found a strong ally in the pirate chief. When Francis I. continued his attacks upon the Duchy, and the Grisons still adhered to their French paymaster, the Sforza formally invested Gian Giacomo de' Medici with the perpetual governorship of Musso, the Lake of Como, and as much as he could wrest from the Grisons above the lake. Furnished now with a just title for his depredations, Il Medeghino undertook the siege of Chiavenna. That town is the key to the valleys of the Splügen and Bregaglia. Strongly fortified and well situated for defence, the burghers of the Grisons well knew that upon its possession depended their power in the Italian valleys. To take it by assault was impossible. Il Medeghino used craft, entered the castle, and soon had the city at his disposition. Nor did he lose time in sweeping Val Bregaglia. The news of this conquest recalled the Switzers from the Duchy ; and as they hurried homeward just before the battle of Pavia, it may be affirmed that Gian Giacomo de' Medici was instrumental in the defeat and capture of the French King. The mountaineers had no great difficulty in dislodging their pirate enemy from Chiavenna, the Valtelline, and Val Bregaglia. But he retained his hold on the Trepievi, occupied the Valsassina, took Porlezza, and established himself still more strongly in Musso as the corsair monarch of the lake.

The tyranny of the Sforzas in Milan was fast going to pieces between France and Spain ; and in 1526 the Marquis of Pescara occupied the capital in the name of Charles V. The Duke, meanwhile, remained a prisoner in his Castello.

Il Medeghino was now without a master; for he refused to acknowledge the Spaniards, preferring to watch events and build his own power on the ruins of the dukedom. At the head of 4,000 men, recruited from the lakes and neighbouring valleys, he swept the country far and wide, and occupied the rich champaign of the Brianza. He was now lord of the lakes of Como and Lugano, and absolute in Lecco and the adjoining valleys. The town of Como itself alone belonged to the Spaniards; and even Como was blockaded by the navy of the corsair. Il Medeghino had a force of seven big ships, with three sails and forty-eight oars, bristling with guns and carrying marines. His flagship was a large brigantine, manned by picked rowers, from the mast of which floated the red banner with the golden *palle* of the Medicean arms. Besides these larger vessels, he commanded a flotilla of countless small boats. It is clear that to reckon with him was a necessity. If he could not be put down with force, he might be bought over by concessions. The Spaniards adopted the second course, and Il Medeghino, judging that the cause of the Sforza family was desperate, determined in 1528 to attach himself to the Empire. Charles V. invested him with the Castle of Musso and the larger part of Como Lake, including the town of Lecco. He now assumed the titles of Marquis of Musso and Count of Lecco: and in order to prove his sovereignty before the world, he coined money with his own name and devices.

It will be observed that Gian Giacomo de' Medici had hitherto acted with a single-hearted view to his own interests. At the age of thirty he had raised himself from nothing to a principality, which, though petty, might compare with many of some name in Italy—with Carpi, for example, or Mirandola, or Camerino. Nor did he mean to remain quiet in the prime of life. He regarded Como Lake as the mere basis for more

arduous undertakings. Therefore, when the whirligig of events restored Francesco Sforza to his duchy in 1529, Il Medeghino refused to obey his old lord. Pretending to move under the Duke's orders, but really acting for himself alone, he proceeded to attack his ancient enemies, the Grisons. By fraud and force he worked his way into their territory, seized Morbegno, and overran the Valtelline. He was destined, however, to receive a serious check. Twelve thousand Switzers rose against him on the one hand, on the other the Duke of Milan sent a force by land and water to subdue his rebel subject, while Alessandro Gonzaga marched upon his castles in the Brianza. He was thus assailed by formidable forces from three quarters, converging upon the Lake of Como, and driving him to his chosen element, the water. Hastily quitting the Valtelline, he fell back to the Castle of Mandello on the lake, collected his navy, and engaged the ducal ships in a battle off Menaggio. In this battle he was worsted. But he did not lose his courage. From Bellagio, from Varenna, from Bellano he drove forth his enemies, rolled the cannon of the Switzers into the lake, regained Lecco, defeated the troops of Alessandro Gonzaga, and took the Duke of Mantua prisoner. Had he but held Como, it is probable that he might have obtained such terms at this time as would have consolidated his tyranny. The town of Como, however, now belonged to the Duke of Milan, and formed an excellent basis for operations against the pirate. Overmatched, with an exhausted treasury and broken forces, Il Medeghino was at last compelled to give in. Yet he retired with all the honours of war. In exchange for Musso and the lake, the Duke agreed to give him 35,000 golden crowns, together with the feud and marquisate of Marignano. A free pardon was promised not only to himself and his brothers, but to all his followers; and the Duke further undertook to transport his

artillery and munitions of war at his own expense to Marignano. Having concluded this treaty under the auspices of Charles V. and his lieutenant, Il Medeghino, in March 1532, set sail from Musso, and turned his back upon the lake for ever. The Switzers immediately destroyed the towers, forts, walls, and bastions of the Musso promontory, leaving in the midst of their ruins the little chapel of S. Eufemia.

Gian Giacomo de' Medici, henceforth known to Europe as the Marquis of Marignano, now took service under Spain; and through the favour of Anton de Leyva, Viceroy for the Duchy, rose to the rank of Field Marshal. When the Marquis del Vasto succeeded to the Spanish governorship of Milan in 1536, he determined to gratify an old grudge against the ex-pirate, and, having invited him to a banquet, made him prisoner. Il Medeghino was not, however, destined to languish in a dungeon. Princes and kings interested themselves in his fate. He was released, and journeyed to the court of Charles V. in Spain. The Emperor received him kindly, and employed him first in the Low Countries, where he helped to repress the burghers of Ghent, and at the siege of Landrecy commanded the Spanish artillery against other Italian captains of adventure: for, Italy being now dismembered and enslaved, her sons sought foreign service where they found best pay and widest scope for martial science. Afterwards the Medici ruled Bohemia as Spanish Viceroy; and then, as general of the league formed by the Duke of Florence, the Emperor, and the Pope to repress the liberties of Tuscany, distinguished himself in that cruel war of extermination, which turned the fair Contado of Siena into a poisonous Maremma. To the last Il Medeghino preserved the instincts and the passions of a brigand chief. It was at this time that, acting for the Grand Duke of Tuscany, he first claimed open kinship with the Medici of Florence. Heralds and

genealogists produced a pedigree, which seemed to authorise this pretension; he was recognised, together with his brother, Pius IV., as an offshoot of the great house which had already given Dukes to Florence, Kings to France, and two Popes to the Christian world. In the midst of all this foreign service he never forgot his old dream of conquering the Valtelline; and in 1547 he made proposals to the Emperor for a new campaign against the Grisons. Charles V. did not choose to engage in a war, the profits of which would have been inconsiderable for the master of half the civilised world, and which might have proved troublesome by stirring up the tameless Switzers. Il Medeghino was obliged to abandon a project cherished from the earliest dawn of his adventurous manhood.

When Gian Giacomo died in 1555, his brother Battista succeeded to his claims upon Lecco and the Trepievi. His monument, magnificent with five bronze figures, the masterpiece of Leone Lioni, from Menaggio, Michelangelesque in style, and of consummate workmanship, still adorns the Duomo of Milan. It stands close by the door that leads to the roof. This mausoleum, erected to the memory of Gian Giacomo and his brother Gabrio, is said to have cost 7800 golden crowns. On the occasion of the pirate's funeral the Senate of Milan put on mourning, and the whole city followed the great robber, the hero of Renaissance *virtù*, to the grave.

Between the Cathedral of Como and the corsair Medeghino there is but a slight link. Yet so extraordinary were the social circumstances of Renaissance Italy, that almost at every turn, on her seaboard, in her cities, from her hill-tops, we are compelled to blend our admiration for the loveliest and purest works of art amid the choicest scenes of nature with memories of execrable crimes and lawless characters. Sometimes, as at Perugia, the *nexus* is but local. At others, one

single figure, like that of Cellini, unites both points of view in a romance of unparalleled dramatic vividness. Or, again, beneath the vaults of the Certosa, near Pavia, a masterpiece of the serenest beauty carries our thoughts perforce back to the hideous cruelties and snake-like frauds of its despotic founder. This is the excuse for combining two such diverse subjects in one study.

BERGAMO AND BARTOLOMMEO COLLEONI

From the new town of commerce to the old town of history upon the hill, the road is carried along a rampart lined with horse-chestnut trees—clumps of massy foliage, and snowy pyramids of bloom, expanded in the rapture of a southern spring. Each pair of trees between their stems and arch of intermingling leaves includes a space of plain, checkered with cloud-shadows, melting blue and green in amethystine haze. To right and left the last spurs of the Alps descend, jutting like promontories, heaving like islands from the misty breadth below: and here and there are towers, half-lost in airy azure; and cities dwarfed to blots; and silvery lines where rivers flow; and distant, vapour-drowned, dim crests of Apennines. The city walls above us wave with snapdragons and iris among fig-trees sprouting from the riven stones. There are terraces over-rioted with pergolas of vine, and houses shooting forward into balconies and balustrades, from which a Romeo might launch himself at daybreak, warned by the lark's song. A sudden angle in the road is turned, and we pass from air-space and freedom into the old town, beneath walls of dark brown masonry, where wild valerians light their torches of red bloom in immemorial shade. Squalor and splendour live here side by side. Grand Renaissance portals grinning with Satyr masks are flanked by tawdry frescoes shamming stonework, or by doorways where the withered bush hangs out a promise of bad wine.

The Cappella Colleoni is our destination, that masterpiece of the sculptor-architect's craft, with its variegated marbles,—rosy and white and creamy yellow and jet-black,—in patterns, basreliefs, pilasters, statuettes, encrusted on the fanciful domed shrine. Upon the façade are mingled, in the true Renaissance spirit of genial acceptance, motives Christian and Pagan with supreme impartiality. Medallions of emperors and gods alternate with virtues, angels and cupids in a maze of loveliest arabesque; and round the base of the building are told two stories—the one of Adam from his creation to his fall, the other of Hercules and his labours. Italian craftsmen of the *quattrocento* were not averse to setting thus together, in one framework, the myths of our first parents and Alcmena's son: partly perhaps because both subjects gave scope to the free treatment of the nude; but partly also, we may venture to surmise, because the heroism of Hellas counterbalanced the sin of Eden. Here then we see how Adam and Eve were made and tempted and expelled from Paradise and set to labour, how Cain killed Abel, and Lamech slew a man to his hurt, and Isaac was offered on the mountain. The tale of human sin and the promise of redemption are epitomised in twelve of the sixteen basreliefs. The remaining four show Hercules wrestling with Antæus, taming the Nemean lion, extirpating the Hydra, and bending to his will the bull of Crete. Labour, appointed for a punishment to Adam, becomes a title to immortality for the hero. The dignity of man is reconquered by prowess for the Greek, as it is repurchased for the Christian by vicarious suffering. Many may think this interpretation of Amadeo's basreliefs far-fetched; yet, such as it is, it agrees with the spirit of Humanism, bent ever on harmonising the two great traditions of the past. Of the workmanship little need be said, except that it is wholly Lombard, distinguished from the similar work of Della

Quercia at Bologna and Siena by a more imperfect feeling for composition, and a lack of monumental gravity, yet graceful, rich in motives, and instinct with a certain wayward *improvvisatore* charm.

This Chapel was built by the great Condottiere Bartolommeo Colleoni, to be the monument of his puissance even in the grave. It had been the Sacristy of S. Maria Maggiore, which, when the Consiglio della Misericordia refused it to him for his half-proud, half-pious purpose, he took and held by force. The structure, of costliest materials, reared by Gian Antonio Amadeo, cost him 50,000 golden florins. An equestrian statue of gilt wood, voted to him by the town of Bergamo, surmounts his monument inside the Chapel. This was the work of two German masters, called 'Sisto figlio di Enrico Syri da Norimberga' and 'Leonardo Tedesco.' The tomb itself is of marble, executed for the most part in a Lombard style resembling Amadeo's, but scarcely worthy of his genius. The whole effect is disappointing. Five figures representing Mars, Hercules, and three sons-in-law of Colleoni, who surround the sarcophagus of the buried general, are indeed almost grotesque. The angularity and crumpled draperies of the Milanese manner, when so exaggerated, produce an impression of caricature. Yet many subordinate details—a row of *putti* in a *cinquecento* frieze, for instance —and much of the low relief work—especially the Crucifixion with its characteristic episodes of the fainting Maries and the soldiers casting dice—are lovely in their unaffected Lombardism.

There is another portrait of Colleoni in a round above the great door, executed with spirit, though in a *bravura* style that curiously anticipates the decline of Italian sculpture. Gaunt, hollow-eyed, with prominent cheek bones and strong jaws, this animated, half-length statue of the hero bears the

stamp of a good likeness; but when or by whom it was made, I do not know.

Far more noteworthy than Colleoni's own monument is that of his daughter Medea. She died young in 1470, and her father caused her tomb, carved of Carrara marble, to be placed in the Dominican Church of Basella, which he had previously founded. It was not until 1842 that this most precious masterpiece of Antonio Amadeo's skill was transferred to Bergamo. *Hic jacet Medea virgo.* Her hands are clasped across her breast. A robe of rich brocade, gathered to the waist and girdled, lies in simple folds upon the bier. Her throat, exceedingly long and slender, is circled with a string of pearls. Her face is not beautiful, for the features, especially the nose, are large and prominent; but it is pure and expressive of vivid individuality. The hair curls in crisp short clusters, and the ear, fine and shaped almost like a Faun's, reveals the scrupulous fidelity of the sculptor. Italian art has, in truth, nothing more exquisite than this still sleeping figure of the girl, who, when she lived, must certainly have been so rare of type and lovable in personality. If Busti's Lancinus Curtius be the portrait of a humanist, careworn with study, burdened by the laurel leaves that were so dry and dusty—if Gaston de Foix in the Brera, smiling at death and beautiful in the cropped bloom of youth, idealise the hero of romance—if Michelangelo's Penseroso translate in marble the dark broodings of a despot's soul—if Della Porta's Julia Farnese be the Roman courtesan magnificently throned in nonchalance at a Pope's footstool—if Verocchio's Colleoni on his horse at Venice impersonate the pomp and circumstance of scientific war—surely this Medea exhales the flower-like graces, the sweet sanctities of human life, that even in that turbid age were found among high-bred Italian ladies. Such power have mighty sculptors, even in our

modern world, to make the mute stone speak in poems and clasp the soul's life of a century in some five or six transcendent forms.

The Colleoni, or Coglioni, family were of considerable antiquity and well-authenticated nobility in the town of Bergamo. Two lions' heads conjoined formed one of their canting ensigns; another was borrowed from the vulgar meaning of their name. Many members of the house held important office during the three centuries preceding the birth of the famous general, Bartolommeo. He was born in the year 1400 at Solza, in the Bergamasque Contado. His father Paolo, or Pùho as he was commonly called, was poor and exiled from the city, together with the rest of the Guelf nobles, by the Visconti. Being a man of daring spirit, and little inclined to languish in a foreign state as the dependent on some patron, Pùho formed the bold design of seizing the Castle of Trezzo. This he achieved in 1405 by fraud, and afterwards held it as his own by force. Partly with the view of establishing himself more firmly in his acquired lordship, and partly out of family affection, Pùho associated four of his first-cousins in the government of Trezzo. They repaid his kindness with an act of treason and cruelty, only too characteristic of those times in Italy. One day while he was playing at draughts in a room of the Castle, they assaulted him and killed him, seized his wife and the boy Bartolommeo, and flung them into prison. The murdered Pùho had another son, Antonio, who escaped and took refuge with Giorgio Benzone, the tyrant of Crema. After a short time the Colleoni brothers found means to assassinate him also; therefore Bartolommeo alone, a child of whom no heed was taken, remained to be his father's avenger. He and his mother lived together in great indigence at Solza, until the lad felt strong enough to enter the service of one of the numerous

petty Lombard princes, and to make himself if possible a captain of adventure. His name alone was a sufficient introduction, and the Duchy of Milan, dismembered upon the death of Gian Maria Visconti, was in such a state that all the minor despots were increasing their forces and preparing to defend by arms the fragments they had seized from the Visconti heritage. Bartolommeo therefore had no difficulty in recommending himself to Filippo d'Arcello, sometime general in the pay of the Milanese, but now the new lord of Piacenza. With this master he remained as page for two or three years, learning the use of arms, riding, and training himself in the physical exercises which were indispensable to a young Italian soldier. Meanwhile Filippo Maria Visconti reacquired his hereditary dominions; and at the age of twenty, Bartolommeo found it prudent to seek a patron stronger than d'Arcello. The two great Condottieri, Sforza Attendolo and Braccio, divided the military glories of Italy at this period; and any youth who sought to rise in his profession, had to enrol himself under the banners of the one or the other. Bartolommeo chose Braccio for his master, and was enrolled among his men as a simple trooper, or *ragazzo*, with no better prospects than he could make for himself by the help of his talents and his borrowed horse and armour. Braccio at this time was in Apulia, prosecuting the war of the Neapolitan Succession disputed between Alfonso of Aragon and Louis of Anjou under the weak sovereignty of Queen Joan. On which side of a quarrel a Condottiere fought mattered but little: so great was the confusion of Italian politics, and so complete was the egotism of these fraudful, violent, and treacherous party leaders. Yet it may be mentioned that Braccio had espoused Alfonso's cause. Bartolommeo Colleoni early distinguished himself among the ranks of the Bracceschi. But he soon perceived that he could

better his position by deserting to another camp. Accordingly he offered his services to Jacopo Caldora, one of Joan's generals, and received from him a commission of twenty men-at-arms. It may here be parenthetically said that the rank and pay of an Italian captain varied with the number of the men he brought into the field. His title 'Condottiere' was derived from the circumstance that he was said to have received a *Condotta di venti cavalli*, and so forth. Each *cavallo* was equal to one mounted man-at-arms and two attendants, who were also called *ragazzi*. It was his business to provide the stipulated number of men, to keep them in good discipline, and to satisfy their just demands. Therefore an Italian army at this epoch consisted of numerous small armies varying in size, each held together by personal engagements to a captain, and all dependent on the will of a general-in-chief, who had made a bargain with some prince or republic for supplying a fixed contingent of fighting-men. The *Condottiere* was in other words a contractor or *impresario*, undertaking to do a certain piece of work for a certain price, and to furnish the requisite forces for the business in good working order. It will be readily seen upon this system how important were the personal qualities of the captain, and what great advantages those Condottieri had, who, like the petty princes of Romagna and the March, the Montefeltri, Ordelaffi, Malatesti, Manfredi, Orsini, and Vitelli, could rely upon a race of hardy vassals for their recruits.

It is not necessary to follow Colleoni's fortunes in the Regno, at Aquila, Ancona, and Bologna. He continued in the service of Caldora, who was now General of the Church, and had his *Condotta* gradually increased. Meanwhile his cousins, the murderers of his father, began to dread his rising power, and determined, if possible, to ruin him. He was not a man to be easily assassinated; so they sent a hired ruffian

to Caldora's camp to say that Bartolommeo had taken his name by fraud, and that he was himself the real son of Pùho Colleoni. Bartolommeo defied the liar to a duel; and this would have taken place before the army, had not two witnesses appeared, who knew the fathers of both Colleoni and the *bravo*, and who gave such evidence that the captains of the army were enabled to ascertain the truth. The impostor was stripped and drummed out of the camp.

At the conclusion of a peace between the Pope and the Bolognese, Bartolommeo found himself without occupation. He now offered himself to the Venetians, and began to fight again under the great Carmagnola against Filippo Visconti. His engagement allowed him forty men, which, after the judicial murder of Carmagnola at Venice in 1432, were increased to eighty. Erasmo da Narni, better known as Gattamelata, was now his general-in-chief—a man who had risen from the lowest fortunes to one of the most splendid military positions in Italy. Colleoni spent the next years of his life, until 1443, in Lombardy, manœuvring against Il Piccinino, and gradually rising in the Venetian service, until his Condotta reached the number of 800 men. Upon Gattamelata's death at Padua in 1440, Colleoni became the most important of the generals who had fought with Caldora in the March. The lordships of Romano n the Bergamasque and of Covo and Antegnate in the Cremonese had been assigned to him; and he was in a position to make independent engagements with princes. What distinguished him as a general, was a combination of caution with audacity. He united the brilliant system of his master Braccio with the more prudent tactics of the Sforzeschi; and thus, though he often surprised his foes by daring stratagems and vigorous assaults, he rarely met with any serious check. He was a captain who could be relied upon for boldly seizing an advantage, no less

than for using a success with discretion. Moreover he had acquired an almost unique reputation for honesty in dealing with his masters, and for justice combined with humane indulgence to his men. His company was popular, and he could always bring capital troops into the field.

In the year 1443 Colleoni quitted the Venetian service on account of a quarrel with Gherardo Dandolo, the Proveditore of the Republic. He now took a commission from Filippo Maria Visconti, who received him at Milan with great honour, bestowed on him the Castello Adorno at Pavia, and sent him into the March of Ancona upon a military expedition. Of all Italian tyrants this Visconti was the most difficult to serve. Constitutionally timid, surrounded with a crowd of spies and base informers, shrinking from the sight of men in the recesses of his palace, and controlling the complicated affairs of his Duchy by means of correspondents and intelligencers, this last scion of the Milanese despots lived like a spider in an inscrutable network of suspicion and intrigue. His policy was one of endless plot and counterplot. He trusted no man; his servants were paid to act as spies on one another; his bodyguard consisted of mutually hostile mercenaries; his captains in the field were watched and thwarted by commissioners appointed to check them at the point of successful ambition or magnificent victory. The historian has a hard task when he tries to fathom the Visconti's schemes, or to understand his motives. Half the Duke's time seems to have been spent in unravelling the webs that he had woven, in undoing his own work, and weakening the hands of his chosen ministers. Conscious that his power was artificial, that the least breath might blow him back into the nothingness from which he had arisen on the wrecks of his father's tyranny, he dreaded the personal eminence of his generals above all things. His chief object was to establish a system of checks, by means

of which no one whom he employed should at any moment be great enough to threaten him. The most formidable of these military adventurers, Francesco Sforza, had been secured by marriage with Bianca Maria Visconti, his master's only daughter, in 1441 ; but the Duke did not even trust his son-in-law. The last six years of his life were spent in scheming to deprive Sforza of his lordships ; and the war in the March, on which he employed Colleoni, had the object of ruining the principality acquired by this daring captain from Pope Eugenius IV. in 1443.

Colleoni was by no means deficient in those foxlike qualities which were necessary to save the lion from the toils spread for him by Italian intriguers. He had already shown that he knew how to push his own interests, by changing sides and taking service with the highest bidder, as occasion prompted. Nor, though his character for probity and loyalty stood exceptionally high among the men of his profession, was he the slave to any questionable claims of honour or of duty. In that age of confused politics and extinguished patriotism, there was not indeed much scope for scrupulous honesty. But Filippo Maria Visconti proved more than a match for him in craft. While Colleoni was engaged in pacifying the revolted population of Bologna, the Duke yielded to the suggestion of his parasites at Milan, who whispered that the general was becoming dangerously powerful. He recalled him, and threw him without trial into the dungeons of the Forni at Monza. Here Colleoni remained a prisoner more than a year, until the Duke's death in 1447, when he made his escape, and profited by the disturbance of the Duchy to reacquire his lordships in the Bergamasque territory. The true motive for his imprisonment remains still buried in obscure conjecture. Probably it was not even known to the Visconti, who acted on this, as on so many other occasions,

by a mere spasm of suspicious jealousy, for which he could have given no account.

From the year 1447 to the year 1455, it is difficult to follow Colleoni's movements, or to trace his policy. First, we find him employed by the Milanese Republic, during its brief space of independence; then he is engaged by the Venetians, with a commission for 1500 horse; next, he is in the service of Francesco Sforza; once more in that of the Venetians, and yet again in that of the Duke of Milan. His biographer relates with pride that, during this period, he was three times successful against French troops in Piedmont and Lombardy. It appears that he made short engagements, and changed his paymasters according to convenience. But all this time he rose in personal importance, acquired fresh lordships in the Bergamasque, and accumulated wealth. He reached the highest point of his prosperity in 1455, when the Republic of S. Mark elected him General-in-Chief of their armies, with the fullest powers, and with a stipend of 100,000 florins. For nearly twenty-one years, until the day of his death, in 1475, Colleoni held this honourable and lucrative office. In his will he charged the Signory of Venice that they should never again commit into the hands of a single captain such unlimited control over their military resources. It was indeed no slight tribute to Colleoni's reputation for integrity, that the jealous Republic, which had signified its sense of Carmagnola's untrustworthiness by capital punishment, should have left him so long in the undisturbed disposal of their army. The Standard and the Bâton of S. Mark were conveyed to Colleoni by two ambassadors, and presented to him at Brescia on June 24, 1455. Three years later he made a triumphal entry into Venice, and received the same ensigns of military authority from the hands of the new Doge, Pasquale Malipiero. On this occasion his staff consisted of

some two hundred officers, splendidly armed, and followed by a train of serving-men. Noblemen from Bergamo, Brescia, and other cities of the Venetian territory, swelled the cortége. When they embarked on the lagoons, they found the water covered with boats and gondolas, bearing the population of Venice in gala attire, to greet the illustrious guest with instruments of music. Three great galleys of the Republic, called Bucentaurs, issued from the crowd of smaller craft. On the first was the Doge in his state robes, attended by the government in office, or the Signoria of S. Mark. On the second were members of the Senate and minor magistrates. The third carried the ambassadors of foreign powers. Colleoni was received into the first state-galley, and placed by the side of the Doge. The oarsmen soon cleared the space between the land and Venice, passed the small canals, and swept majestically up the Canalozzo among the plaudits of the crowds assembled on both sides to cheer their General. Thus they reached the piazzetta, where Colleoni alighted between the two great pillars, and, conducted by the Doge in person, walked to the Church of S. Mark. Here, after Mass had been said, and a sermon had been preached, kneeling before the high altar he received the truncheon from the Doge's hands. The words of his commission ran as follows:—

'By authority and decree of this most excellent City of Venice, of us the Prince, and of the Senate, you are to be Commander and Captain General of all our forces and armaments on terra firma. Take from our hands this truncheon, with good augury and fortune, as sign and warrant of your power. Be it your care and effort, with dignity and splendour to maintain and to defend the Majesty, the Loyalty, and the Principles of this Empire. Neither provoking, not yet provoked, unless at our command, shall you break into open

warfare with our enemies. Free jurisdiction and lordship over each one of our soldiers, except in cases of treason, we hereby commit to you.'

After the ceremony of his reception, Colleoni was conducted with no less pomp to his lodgings, and the next ten days were spent in festivities of all sorts.

The commandership-in-chief of the Venetian forces was perhaps the highest military post in Italy. It placed Colleoni on the pinnacle of his profession, and made his camp the favourite school of young soldiers. Among his pupils or lieutenants we read of Ercole d'Este, the future Duke of Ferrara; Alessandro Sforza, lord of Pesaro; Boniface, Marquis of Montferrat; Cicco and Pino Ordelaffi, princes of Forli; Astorre Manfredi, the lord of Faenza; three Counts of Mirandola; two princes of Carpi; Deifobo, the Count of Anguillara; Giovanni Antonio Caldora, lord of Jesi in the March; and many others of less name. Honours came thick upon him. When one of the many ineffectual leagues against the infidel was formed in 1468, during the pontificate of Paul II., he was named Captain-General for the Crusade. Pius II. designed him for the leader of the expedition he had planned against the impious and savage despot, Sigismondo Malatesta. King René of Anjou, by special patent, authorised him to bear his name and arms, and made him a member of his family. The Duke of Burgundy, by a similar heraldic fiction, conferred upon him his name and armorial bearings. This will explain why Colleoni is often styled 'di Andegavia e Borgogna.' In the case of René, the honour was but a barren show. But the patent of Charles the Bold had more significance. In 1473 he entertained the project of employing the great Italian General against his Swiss foes; nor does it seem reasonable to reject a statement made by Colleoni's biographer, to the effect that a secret compact had been

drawn up between him and the Duke of Burgundy, for the conquest and partition of the Duchy of Milan. The Venetians, in whose service Colleoni still remained, when they became aware of this project, met it with peaceful but irresistible opposition.

Colleoni had been engaged continually since his earliest boyhood in the trade of war. It was not therefore possible that he should have gained a great degree of literary culture. Yet the fashion of the times made it necessary that a man in his position should seek the society of scholars. Accordingly his court and camp were crowded with students, in whose wordy disputations he is said to have delighted. It will be remembered that his contemporaries, Alfonso the Magnanimous, Francesco Sforza, Federigo of Urbino, and Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, piqued themselves at least as much upon their patronage of letters, as upon their prowess in the field.

Colleoni's court, like that of Urbino, was a model of good manners. As became a soldier, he was temperate in food and moderate in slumber. It was recorded of him that he had never sat more than one hour at meat in his own house, and that he never overslept the sunrise. After dinner he would converse with his friends, using commonly his native dialect of Bergamo, and entertaining the company now with stories of adventure, and now with pithy sayings. In another essential point he resembled his illustrious contemporary, the Duke of Urbino; for he was sincerely pious in an age which, however it preserved the decencies of ceremonial religion, was profoundly corrupt at heart. His principal lordships in the Bergamasque territory owed to his munificence their fairest churches and charitable institutions. At Martinengo, for example, he rebuilt and re-endowed two monasteries, the one dedicated to S. Chiara, the other to S. Francis. In Bergamo itself he founded an establishment named 'La Pietà,' for

the good purpose of dowering and marrying poor girls. This house he endowed with a yearly income of 3000 ducats. The Sulphur baths of Trescorio, at some distance from the city, were improved and opened to poor patients by a hospital which he provided. At Rumano he raised a church to S. Peter, and erected buildings of public utility, which on his death he bequeathed to the society of the Misericordia in that town. All the places of his jurisdiction owed to him such benefits as good water, new walls, and irrigation works. In addition to these munificent foundations must be mentioned the Basella, or Monastery of Dominican friars, which he established not far from Bergamo, upon the river Serio, in memory of his beloved daughter Medea. Last, not least, was the Chapel of S. John the Baptist, attached to the Church of S. Maria Maggiore, which he endowed with fitting maintenance for two priests and deacons.

The one defect acknowledged by his biographer was his partiality for women. Early in life he married Tisbe, of the noble house of the Brescian Martinenghi, who bore him one daughter, Caterina, wedded to Gasparre Martinengo. Two illegitimate daughters, Ursina and Isotta, were recognised and treated by him as legitimate. The first he gave in marriage to Gherardo Martinengo, and the second to Jacopo of the same family. Two other natural children, Doratina and Ricardona, were mentioned in his will: he left them four thousand ducats a piece for dowry. Medea, the child of his old age (for she was born to him when he was sixty), died before her father, and was buried, as we have seen, in the Chapel of Basella.

Throughout his life he was distinguished for great physical strength and agility. When he first joined the troop of Braccio, he could race, with his corselet on, against the swiftest runner of the army; and when he was stripped, few

horses could beat him in speed. Far on into old age he was in the habit of taking long walks every morning for the sake of exercise, and delighted in feats of arms and jousting matches. 'He was tall, straight, and full of flesh, well proportioned, and excellently made in all his limbs. His complexion inclined somewhat to brown, but was coloured with sanguine and lively carnation. His eyes were black; in look and sharpness of light, they were vivid, piercing, and terrible. The outlines of his nose and all his countenance expressed a certain manly nobleness, combined with goodness and prudence.' Such is the portrait drawn of Colleoni by his biographer; and it well accords with the famous bronze statue of the general at Venice.

Colleoni lived with a magnificence that suited his rank. His favourite place of abode was Malpaga, a castle built by him at the distance of about an hour's drive from Bergamo. The place is worth a visit, though its courts and gates and galleries have now been turned into a monster farm, and the southern rooms, where Colleoni entertained his guests, are given over to the silkworms. Half a dozen families, employed upon a vast estate of the Martinengo family, occupy the still substantial house and stables. The moat is planted with mulberry-trees; the upper rooms are used as granaries for golden maize; cows, pigs, and horses litter in the spacious yard. Yet the walls of the inner court and of the ancient state rooms are brilliant with frescoes, executed by some good Venetian hand, which represent the chief events of Colleoni's life—his battles, his reception by the Signory of Venice, his tournaments and hawking parties, and the great series of entertainments with which he welcomed Christiern of Denmark. This king had made his pilgrimage to Rome and was returning westward, when the fame of Colleoni and his princely state at Malpaga induced him to turn aside and spend

some days as the general's guest. In order to do him honour, Colleoni left his castle at the king's disposal and established himself with all his staff and servants in a camp at some distance from Malpaga. The camp was duly furnished with tents and trenches, stockades, artillery, and all the other furniture of war. On the king's approach, Colleoni issued with trumpets blowing and banners flying to greet his guest, gratifying him thus with a spectacle of the pomp and circumstance of war as carried on in Italy. The visit was further enlivened by sham fights, feats of arms, and trials of strength. When it ended, Colleoni presented the king with one of his own suits of armour, and gave to each of his servants a complete livery of red and white, his colours. Among the frescoes at Malpaga none are more interesting, and none, thanks to the silkworms rather than to any other cause, are fortunately in a better state of preservation, than those which represent this episode in the history of the Castle.

Colleoni died in the year 1475, at the age of seventy-five. Since he left no male representative, he constituted the Republic of S. Mark his heir-in-chief, after properly providing for his daughters and his numerous foundations. The Venetians received under this testament a sum of 100,000 ducats, together with all arrears of pay due to him, and 10,000 ducats owed him by the Duke of Ferrara. It set forth the testator's intention that this money should be employed in defence of the Christian faith against the Turk. One condition was attached to the bequest. The legatees were to erect a statue to Colleoni on the Piazza of S. Mark. This, however, involved some difficulty; for the proud Republic had never accorded a similar honour, nor did they choose to encumber their splendid square with a monument. They evaded the condition by assigning the Campo in front of the Scuola di S. Marco, where also stands the Church of S.

Zanipolo, to the purpose. Here accordingly the finest bronze equestrian statue in Italy, if we except the Marcus Aurelius of the Capitol, was reared upon its marble pedestal by Andrea Verocchio and Alessandro Leopardi.

Colleoni's liberal expenditure of wealth found its reward in the immortality conferred by art. While the names of Braccio, his master in the art of war, and of Piccinino, his great adversary, are familiar to few but professed students, no one who has visited either Bergamo or Venice can fail to have learned something about the founder of the Chapel of S. John and the original of Leopardi's bronze. The annals of sculpture assign to Verocchio, of Florence, the principal share in this statue: but Verocchio died before it was cast; and even granting that he designed the model, its execution must be attributed to his collaborator, the Venetian Leopardi. For my own part, I am loth to admit that the chief credit of this masterpiece belongs to a man whose undisputed work at Florence shows but little of its living spirit and splendour of suggested motion. That the Tuscan science of Verocchio secured conscientious modelling for man and horse may be assumed; but I am fain to believe that the concentrated fire which animates them both is due in no small measure to the handling of his northern fellow-craftsman.

While immersed in the dreary records of crimes, treasons, cruelties, and base ambitions, which constitute the bulk of fifteenth-century Italian history, it is refreshing to meet with a character so frank and manly, so simply pious and comparatively free from stain, as Colleoni. The only general of his day who can bear comparison with him for purity of public life and decency in conduct, was Federigo di Montefeltro. Even here, the comparison redounds to Colleoni's credit; for he, unlike the Duke of Urbino, rose to eminence by his own exertion in a profession fraught with peril to men

of ambition and energy. Federigo started with a principality sufficient to satisfy his just desires for power. Nothing but his own sense of right and prudence restrained Colleoni upon the path which brought Francesco Sforza to a duchy by dishonourable dealings, and Carmagnola to the scaffold by questionable practice against his masters.

CREMA AND THE CRUCIFIX

Few people visit Crema. It is a little country town of Lombardy, between Cremona and Treviglio, with no historic memories but very misty ones belonging to the days of the Visconti dynasty. On every side around the city walls stretch smiling vineyards and rich meadows, where the elms are married to the mulberry-trees by long festoons of foliage hiding purple grapes, where the sunflowers droop their heavy golden heads among tall stems of millet and gigantic maize, and here and there a rice-crop ripens in the marshy loam. In vintage time the carts, drawn by their white oxen, come creaking townward in the evening, laden with blue bunches. Down the long straight roads, between rows of poplars, they creep on; and on the shafts beneath the pyramid of fruit lie contadini stained with lees of wine. Far off across that 'waveless sea' of Lombardy, which has been the battlefield of countless generations, rise the dim grey Alps, or else pearled domes of thunder-clouds in gleaming masses over some tall solitary tower. Such backgrounds, full of peace, suggestive of almost infinite distance, and dignified with colours of incomparable depth and breadth, the Venetian painters loved. No landscape in Europe is more wonderful than this—thrice wonderful in the vastness of its arching heavens, in the stillness of its level plain, and in the bulwark of huge crested mountains, reared afar like bastions against the northern sky.

The little town is all alive in this September weather. At every corner of the street, under rustling abeles and thick-foliaged planes, at the doors of palaces and in the yards of inns, men, naked from the thighs downward, are treading the red must into vats and tuns; while their mild-eyed oxen lie beneath them in the road, peaceably chewing the cud between one journey to the vineyard and another. It must not be imagined that the scene of Alma Tadema's 'Roman Vintage,' or what we fondly picture to our fancy of the Athenian Lenæa, is repeated in the streets of Crema. This modern treading of the wine-press is a very prosaic affair. The town reeks with a sour smell of old casks and crushed grape-skins, and the men and women at work bear no resemblance whatever to Bacchus and his crew. Yet even as it is, the Lombard vintage, beneath floods of sunlight and a pure blue sky, is beautiful; and he who would fain make acquaintance with Crema, should time his entry into the old town, if possible, on some still golden afternoon of autumn. It is then, if ever, that he will learn to love the glowing brickwork of its churches and the quaint terra-cotta traceries that form its chief artistic charm.

How the unique brick architecture of the Lombard cities took its origin—whether from the precepts of Byzantine aliens in the earliest middle ages, or from the native instincts of a mixed race composed of Gallic, Ligurian, Roman, and Teutonic elements, under the leadership of Longobardic rulers—is a question for antiquarians to decide. There can, however, be no doubt that the monuments of the Lombard style, as they now exist, are no less genuinely local, no less characteristic of the country they adorn, no less indigenous to the soil they sprang from, than the Attic colonnades of Mnesicles and Ictinus. What the marble quarries of Pentelicus were to the Athenian builders, the clay beneath their

feet was to those Lombard craftsmen. From it they fashioned structures as enduring, towers as majestic, and cathedral aisles as solemn, as were ever wrought from chiselled stone. There is a true sympathy between those buildings and the Lombard landscape, which by itself might suffice to prove the originality of their almost unknown architects. The rich colour of the baked clay—finely modulated from a purplish red, through russet, crimson, pink, and orange, to pale yellow and dull grey—harmonises with the brilliant greenery of Lombard vegetation and with the deep azure of the distant Alpine range. Reared aloft above the flat expanse of plain, those square *torroni*, tapering into octagons and crowned with slender cones, break the long sweeping lines and infinite horizons with a contrast that affords relief, and yields a resting-place to tired eyes; while, far away, seen haply from some bridge above Ticino, or some high-built palace loggia, they gleam like columns of pale rosy fire against the front of mustering storm-clouds blue with rain. In that happy orchard of Italy, a pergola of vines in leaf, a clump of green acacias, and a campanile soaring above its church roof, brought into chance combination with the reaches of the plain and the dim mountain range, make up a picture eloquent in its suggestive beauty.

Those ancient builders wrought cunningly with their material. The bricks are fashioned and fixed to last for all time. Exposed to the icy winds of a Lombard winter, to the fierce fire of a Lombard summer, and to the moist vapours of a Lombard autumn; neglected by unheeding generations; with flowers clustering in their crannies, and birds nesting in their eaves, and mason-bees filling the delicate network of their traceries—they still present angles as sharp as when they were but finished, and joints as nice as when the mortar dried in the first months of their building. This immunity

from age and injury they owe partly to the imperishable nature of baked clay; partly to the care of the artists who selected and mingled the right sorts of earth, burned them with scrupulous attention, and fitted them together with a patience born of loving service. Each member of the edifice was designed with a view to its ultimate place. The proper curve was ascertained for cylindrical columns and for rounded arches. Larger bricks were moulded for the supporting walls, and lesser pieces were adapted to the airy vaults and lanterns. In the brickfield and the kiln the whole church was planned and wrought out in its details, before the hands that made a unity of all these scattered elements were set to the work of raising it in air. When they came to put the puzzle together, they laid each brick against its neighbour, filling up the almost imperceptible interstices with liquid cement composed of quicklime and fine sand in water. After five centuries the seams between the layers of bricks that make the bell-tower of S. Gottardo at Milan, yield no point of vantage to the penknife or the chisel.

Nor was it in their welding of the bricks alone that these craftsmen showed their science. They were wont to enrich the surface with marble, sparingly but effectively employed—as in those slender detached columns, which add such beauty to the octagon of S. Gottardo, or in the string-courses of strange beasts and reptiles that adorn the church fronts of Pavia. They called to their aid the *mandorlato* of Verona, supporting their porch pillars on the backs of couchant lions, inserting polished slabs on their façades, and building huge sarcophagi into their cloister alleys. Between terra-cotta and this marble of Verona there exists a deep and delicate affinity. It took the name of *mandorlato*, I suppose, from a resemblance to almond blossoms. But it is far from having the simple beauty of a single hue. Like all noble veined stones,

it passes by a series of modulations and gradations through a gamut of associated rather than contrasted tints. Not the pink of the almond blossom only, but the creamy whiteness of the almond kernel, and the dull yellow of the almond nut may be found in it; and yet these colours are so blent and blurred to all-pervading mellowness, that nowhere is there any shock of contrast or violence of a preponderating tone. The veins which run in labyrinths of crossing, curving, and contorted lines all over its smooth surface add, no doubt, to this effect of unity. The polish, lastly, which it takes, makes the *mandorlato* shine like a smile upon the sober face of the brickwork: for, serviceable as terra-cotta is for nearly all artistic purposes, it cannot reflect light or gain the illumination which comes from surface brightness.

What the clay can do almost better than any crystalline material, may be seen in the mouldings so characteristic of Lombard architecture. Geometrical patterns of the rarest and most fanciful device; scrolls of acanthus foliage, and traceries of tendrils; Cupids swinging in festoons of vines; angels joining hands in dance, with fluttering skirts and windy hair, and mouths that symbol singing; grave faces of old men and beautiful profiles of maidens leaning from medallions; wide-winged genii filling the spandrils of cloister arches, and cherubs clustered in the rondure of rose-windows —ornaments like these, wrought from the plastic clay, and adapted with true taste to the requirements of the architecture, are familiar to every one who has studied the church front of Crema, the cloisters of the Certosa, the courts of the Ospedale Maggiore at Milan, or the public palace of Cremona.

If the *mandorlato* gives a smile to those majestic Lombard buildings, the terra-cotta decorations add the element of life and movement. The thought of the artist in its first

freshness and vivacity is felt in them. They have all the spontaneity of improvisation, the seductive melody of unpremeditated music. Moulding the supple earth with 'hand obedient to the brain,' the *plasticatore* has impressed his most fugitive dreams of beauty on it without effort; and what it cost him but a few fatigueless hours to fashion, the steady heat of the furnace has gifted with imperishable life. Such work, no doubt, has the defects of its qualities. As there are few difficulties to overcome, it suffers from a fatal facility—*nec pluteum cædit nec demorsos sapit ungues.* It is therefore apt to be unequal, touching at times the highest point of inspiration, as in the angels of Guccio at Perugia, and sinking not unfrequently into the commonplace of easy-going triviality, as in the common floral traceries of Milanese windows. But it is never laboured, never pedantic, never dulled by the painful effort to subdue an obstinate material to the artist's will. If marble is required to develop the strength of the few supreme sculptors, terra-cotta saves intact the fancies of a crowd of lesser men.

When we reflect that all the force, solemnity, and beauty of the Lombard buildings was evoked from clay, we learn from them this lesson: that the thought of man needs neither precious material nor yet stubborn substance for the production of enduring masterpieces. The red earth was enough for God when He made man in His own image; and mud dried in the sun suffices for the artist, who is next to God in his creative faculty—since *non merita nome di creatore se non Iddio ed il poeta.* After all, what is more everlasting than terra-cotta? The hobnails of the boys who ran across the brickfields in the Roman town of Silchester, may still be seen, mingled with the impress of the feet of dogs and hoofs of goats, in the tiles discovered there. Such traces might serve as a metaphor for the footfall of artistic genius, when

the form-giver has stamped his thought upon the moist clay, and fire has made that imprint permanent.

Of all these Lombard edifices, none is more beautiful than the Cathedral of Crema, with its delicately finished campanile, built of choicely tinted yellow bricks, and ending in a lantern of the gracefullest, most airily capricious fancy. This bell-tower does not display the gigantic force of Cremona's famous *torrazzo*, shooting 396 feet into blue ether from the city square; nor can it rival the octagon of S. Gottardo for warmth of hue. Yet it has a character of elegance, combined with boldness of invention, that justifies the citizens of Crema in their pride. It is unique; and he who has not seen it does not know the whole resources of the Lombard style. The façade of the Cathedral displays that peculiar blending of Byzantine or Romanesque round arches with Gothic details in the windows, and with the acute angle of the central pitch, which forms the characteristic quality of the late *trecento* Lombard manner. In its combination of purity and richness it corresponds to the best age of decorated work in English Gothic. What, however, strikes a Northern observer is the strange detachment of this elaborate façade from the main structure of the church. Like a frontispiece cut out of cardboard and pierced with ornamental openings, it shoots far above the low roof of the nave; so that at night the moon, rising above the southern aisle, shines through its topmost window, and casts the shadow of its tracery upon the pavement of the square. This is a constructive blemish to which the Italians in no part of the peninsula were sensitive. They seem to have regarded their church fronts as independent of the edifice, capable of separate treatment, and worthy in themselves of being made the subject of decorative skill.

In the so-called Santuario of Crema—a circular church dedicated to S. Maria della Croce, outside the walls—the

Lombard style has been adapted to the manner of the Mid-Renaissance. This church was raised in the last years of the fifteenth century by Gian Battista Battagli, an architect of Lodi, who followed the pure rules of taste, bequeathed to North Italian builders by Bramante. The beauty of the edifice is due entirely to its tranquil dignity and harmony of parts, the lightness of its circling loggia, and the just proportion maintained between the central structure and the four projecting porticoes. The sharp angles of these vestibules afford a contrast to the simplicity of the main building, while their clustered cupolas assist the general effect of roundness aimed at by the architect. Such a church as this proves how much may be achieved by the happy distribution of architectural masses. It was the triumph of the best Renaissance style to attain lucidity of treatment, and to produce beauty by geometrical proportion. When Leo Battista Alberti complained to his friend, Matteo di Bastia, that a slight alteration of the curves in his design for S. Francesco at Rimini would 'spoil his music,' *ciò che tu muti discorda tutta quella musica*, this is what he meant. The melody of lines and the harmony of parts made a symphony to his eyes no less agreeable than a concert of tuned lutes and voices to his ears; and to this concord he was so sensitive that any deviation was a discord.

After visiting the churches of Crema and sauntering about the streets awhile, there is nothing left to do but to take refuge in the old Albergo del Pozzo. This is one of those queer Italian inns, which carry you away at once into a scene of Goldoni. It is part of some palace, where nobles housed their *bravi* in the sixteenth century, and which the lesser people of to-day have turned into a dozen habitations. Its great stone staircase leads to a saloon upon which the various bedchambers open; and round its courtyard runs an open

balcony, and from the court grows up a fig-tree poking ripe fruit against a bedroom window. Oleanders in tubs and red salvias in pots, and kitchen herbs in boxes, flourish on the pavement, where the ostler comes to wash his carriages, and where the barber shaves the poodle of the house. Visitors to the Albergo del Pozzo are invariably asked if they have seen the Museo ; and when they answer in the negative, they are conducted with some ceremony to a large room on the ground-floor of the inn, looking out upon the courtyard and the fig-tree. It was here that I gained the acquaintance of Signor Folcioni, and became possessor of an object that has made the memory of Crema doubly interesting to me ever since.

When we entered the Museo, we found a little old man, gentle, grave, and unobtrusive, varnishing the ugly portrait of some Signor of the *cinquecento*. Round the walls hung pictures, of mediocre value, in dingy frames ; but all of them bore sounding titles. Titians, Lionardos, Guido Renis, and Luinis, looked down and waited for a purchaser. In truth this museum was a *bric-à-brac* shop of a sort that is common enough in Italy, where treasures of old lace, glass, armour, furniture, and tapestry, may still be met with. Signor Folcioni began by pointing out the merits of his pictures ; and after making due allowance for his zeal as amateur and dealer, it was possible to join in some of his eulogiums. A would-be Titian, for instance, bought in Verona from a noble house in ruins, showed Venetian wealth of colour in its gemmy greens and lucid crimsons shining from a background deep and glowing. Then he led us to a walnut-wood bureau of late Renaissance work, profusely carved with nymphs and Cupids, and armed men, among festoons of fruits embossed in high relief. Deeply drilled worm-holes set a seal of antiquity upon the blooming faces and luxuriant garlands—

like the touch of Time who 'delves the parallels in beauty's brow.' On the shelves of an ebony cabinet close by he showed us a row of cups cut out of rock-crystal and mounted in gilt silver, with heaps of engraved gems, old snuff-boxes, coins, medals, sprays of coral, and all the indescribable lumber that one age flings aside as worthless for the next to pick up from the dust-heap and regard as precious. Surely the genius of culture in our century might be compared to a *chiffonnier* of Paris, who, when the night has fallen, goes into the streets, bag on back and lantern in hand, to rake up the waifs and strays a day of whirling life has left him.

The next curiosity was an ivory carving of S. Anthony preaching to the fishes, so fine and small you held it on your palm, and used a lens to look at it. Yet there stood the Santo gesticulating, and there were the fishes in rows—the little fishes first, and then the middle-sized, and last of all the great big fishes almost out at sea, with their heads above the water and their mouths wide open, just as the *Fioretti di San Francesco* describes them. After this came some original drawings of doubtful interest, and then a case of fifty-two *nielli*. These were of unquestionable value; for has not Cicognara engraved them on a page of his classic monograph? The thin silver plates, over which once passed the burin of Maso Finiguerra, cutting lines finer than hairs, and setting here a shadow in dull acid-eaten grey, and there a high light of exquisite polish, were far more delicate than any proofs impressed from them. These frail masterpieces of Florentine art—the first beginnings of line engraving—we held in our hands while Signor Folcioni read out Cicognara's commentary in a slow impressive voice, breaking off now and then to point at the originals before us.

The sun had set, and the room was almost dark, when he laid his book down, and said: 'I have not much left to show

—yet stay! Here are still some little things of interest.' He then opened the door into his bedroom, and took down from a nail above his bed a wooden Crucifix. Few things have fascinated me more than this Crucifix—produced without parade, half negligently, from the dregs of his collection by a dealer in old curiosities at Crema. The cross was, or *is*—for it is lying on the table now before me—twenty-one inches in length, made of strong wood, covered with coarse yellow parchment, and shod at the four ends with brass. The Christ is roughly hewn in reddish wood, coloured scarlet, where the blood streams from the five wounds. Over the head an oval medallion, nailed into the cross, serves as framework to a miniature of the Madonna, softly smiling with a Correggiesque simper. The whole Crucifix is not a work of art, but such as may be found in every convent. Its date cannot be earlier than the beginning of the eighteenth century. As I held it in my hand, I thought—perhaps this has been carried to the bedside of the sick and dying; preachers have brandished it from the pulpit over conscience-stricken congregations; monks have knelt before it on the brick floor of their cells, and novices have kissed it in the vain desire to drown their yearnings after the relinquished world; perhaps it has attended criminals to the scaffold, and heard the secrets of repentant murderers; but why should it be shown me as a thing of rarity? These thoughts passed through my mind, while Signor Folcioni quietly remarked: 'I bought this Cross from the Frati when their convent was dissolved in Crema.' Then he bade me turn it round, and showed a little steel knob fixed into the back between the arms. This was a spring. He pressed it, and the upper and lower parts of the cross came asunder; and holding the top like a handle, I drew out as from a scabbard a sharp steel blade, concealed in the thickness of the wood, behind the very body of the agonising Christ. What

had been a crucifix became a deadly poniard in my grasp, and the rust upon it in the twilight looked like blood. 'I have often wondered,' said Signor Folcioni, 'that the Frati cared to sell me this.'

There is no need to raise the question of the genuineness of this strange relic, though I confess to having had my doubts about it, or to wonder for what nefarious purposes the impious weapon was designed—whether the blade was inserted by some rascal monk who never told the tale, or whether it was used on secret service by the friars. On its surface the infernal engine carries a dark certainty of treason, sacrilege, and violence. Yet it would be wrong to incriminate the Order of S. Francis by any suspicion, and idle to seek the actual history of this mysterious weapon. A writer of fiction could indeed produce some dark tale in the style of De Stendhal's 'Nouvelles,' and christen it 'The Crucifix of Crema.' And how delighted would Webster have been if he had chanced to hear of such a sword-sheath! He might have placed it in the hands of Bosola for the keener torment of his Duchess. Flamineo might have used it; or the disguised friars, who made the deathbed of Bracciano hideous, might have plunged it in the Duke's heart after mocking his eyes with the figure of the suffering Christ. To imagine such an instrument of moral terror mingled with material violence, lay within the scope of Webster's sinister and powerful genius. But unless he had seen it with his eyes, what poet would have ventured to devise the thing and display it even in the dumb show of a tragedy? Fact is more wonderful than romance. No apocalypse of Antichrist matches what is told of Roderigo Borgia; and the crucifix of Crema exceeds the sombre fantasy of Webster.

Whatever may be the truth about this cross, it has at any rate the value of a symbol or a metaphor. The idea which it

materialises, the historical events of which it is a sign, may well arrest attention. A sword concealed in the crucifix—what emblem brings more forcibly to mind than this that two-edged glaive of persecution which Dominic unsheathed to mow down the populations of Provence and to make Spain destitute of men? Looking upon the crucifix of Crema, we may seem to see pestilence-stricken multitudes of Moors and Jews dying on the coasts of Africa and Italy. The Spaniards enter Mexico; and this is the cross they carry in their hands. They take possession of Peru; and while the gentle people of the Incas come to kiss the bleeding brows of Christ, they plunge this dagger in their sides. What, again, was the temporal power of the Papacy but a sword embedded in a cross? Each Papa Rè, when he ascended the Holy Chair, was forced to take the crucifix of Crema and to bear it till his death. A long procession of war-loving Pontiffs, levying armies and paying captains with the pence of S. Peter, in order to keep by arms the lands they had acquired by fraud, defiles before our eyes. First goes the terrible Sixtus IV., who died of grief when news was brought him that the Italian princes had made peace. He it was who sanctioned the conspiracy to murder the Medici in church, at the moment of the elevation of the Host. The brigands hired to do this work refused at the last moment. The sacrilege appalled them. 'Then,' says the chronicler, 'was found a priest, who, being used to churches, had no scruple.' The poignard this priest carried was this crucifix of Crema. After Sixtus came the blood-stained Borgia; and after him Julius II., whom the Romans in triumphal songs proclaimed a second Mars, and who turned, as Michelangelo expressed it, the chalices of Rome into swords and helms. Leo X., who dismembered Italy for his brother and nephew; and Clement VII., who broke the neck of Florence and delivered the Eternal City to the spoiler,

follow. Of the antinomy between the Vicariate of Christ and an earthly kingdom, incarnated by these and other Holy Fathers, what symbol could be found more fitting than a dagger with a crucifix for case and covering?

It is not easy to think or write of these matters without rhetoric. When I laid my head upon my pillow that night in the Albergo del Pozzo at Crema, it was full of such thoughts; and when at last sleep came, it brought with it a dream begotten doubtless by the perturbation of my fancy. For I thought that a brown Franciscan, with hollow cheeks, and eyes aflame beneath his heavy cowl, sat by my bedside, and, as he raised the crucifix in his lean quivering hands, whispered a tale of deadly passion and of dastardly revenge. His confession carried me away to a convent garden of Palermo; and there was love in the story, and hate that is stronger than love, and, for the ending of the whole matter, remorse which dies not even in the grave. Each new possessor of the crucifix of Crema, he told me, was forced to hear from him in dreams his dreadful history. But, since it was a dream and nothing more, why should I repeat it? I have wandered far enough already from the vintage and the sunny churches of the little Lombard town.

CHERUBINO AT THE SCALA THEATRE

I

It was a gala night. The opera-house of Milan was one blaze of light and colour. Royalty in field-marshal's uniform and diamonds, attended by decorated generals and radiant ladies of the court, occupied the great box opposite the stage. The tiers from pit to gallery were filled with brilliantly dressed women. From the third row, where we were fortunately placed, the curves of that most beautiful of theatres presented to my gaze a series of retreating and approaching lines, composed of noble faces, waving feathers, sparkling jewels, sculptured shoulders, uniforms, robes of costly stuffs and every conceivable bright colour. Light poured from the huge lustre in the centre of the roof, ran along the crimson velvet cushions of the boxes, and flashed upon the gilded frame of the proscenium—satyrs and acanthus scrolls carved in the manner of a century ago. Pit and orchestra scarcely contained the crowd of men who stood in lively conversation, their backs turned to the stage, their lorgnettes raised from time to time to sweep the boxes. This surging sea of faces and sober costumes enhanced by contrast the glitter, variety, and luminous tranquillity of the theatre above it.

No one took much thought of the coming spectacle, till the conductor's rap was heard upon his desk, and the orchestra broke into the overture to Mozart's *Nozze*. Before they were half through, it was clear that we should not enjoy that

evening the delight of perfect music added to the enchantment of so brilliant a scene. The execution of the overture was not exactly bad. But it lacked absolute precision, the complete subordination of all details to the whole. In rendering German music Italians often fail through want of discipline, or through imperfect sympathy with a style they will not take the pains to master. Nor, when the curtain lifted and the play began, was the vocalisation found in all parts satisfactory. The Contessa had a meagre *mezza voce*. Susanna, though she did not sing false, hovered on the verge of discords, owing to the weakness of an organ which had to be strained in order to make any effect on that enormous stage. On the other hand, the part of Almaviva was played with dramatic fire, and Figaro showed a truly Southern sense of comic fun. The scenes were splendidly mounted, and something of a princely grandeur—the largeness of a noble train of life—was added to the drama by the vast proportions of the theatre. It was a performance which, in spite of drawbacks, yielded pleasure.

And yet it might have left me frigid but for the artist who played Cherubino. This was no other than Pauline Lucca, in the prime of youth and petulance. From her first appearance to the last note she sang, she occupied the stage. The opera seemed to have been written for her. The mediocrity of the troupe threw her commanding merits—the richness of her voice, the purity of her intonation, her vivid conception of character, her indescribable brusquerie of movement and emotion—into that relief which a sapphire gains from a setting of pearls. I can see her now, after the lapse of nearly twenty years, as she stood there singing in blue doublet and white mantle, with the slouched Spanish hat and plume of ostrich feathers, a tiny rapier at her side, and blue rosettes upon her white silk shoes!

The *Nozze di Figaro* was followed by a Ballo. This had for its theme the favourite legend of a female devil sent from the infernal regions to ruin a young man. Instead of performing the part assigned her, Satanella falls in love with the hero, sacrifices herself, and is claimed at last by the powers of goodness. *Quia multum amavit*, her lost soul is saved. If the opera left much to be desired, the Ballo was perfection. That vast stage of the Scala Theatre had almost overwhelmed the actors of the play. Now, thrown open to its inmost depths, crowded with glittering moving figures, it became a fairyland of fantastic loveliness. Italians possess the art of interpreting a serious dramatic action by pantomime. A Ballo with them is no mere affair of dancing—fine dresses, evolutions performed by brigades of pink-legged women with a fixed smile on their faces. It takes the rank of high expressive art. And the motive of this Ballo was consistently worked out in an intelligible sequence of well-ordered scenes. To moralise upon its meaning would be out of place. It had a conflict of passions, a rhythmical progression of emotions, a tragic climax in the triumph of good over evil.

II

At the end of the performance there were five persons in our box—the beautiful Miranda, and her husband, a celebrated English man of letters; a German professor of biology; a young Milanese gentleman, whom we called Edoardo; and myself. Edoardo and the professor had joined us just before the ballet. I had occupied a seat behind Miranda and my friend the critic from the commencement. We had indeed dined together first at their hotel, the Rebecchino; and they now proposed that we should all adjourn together there on

foot for supper. From the Scala Theatre to the Rebecchino is a walk of some three minutes.

When we were seated at the supper-table and had talked some while upon indifferent topics, the enthusiasm roused in me by Pauline Lucca burst out. I broke a moment's silence by exclaiming, 'What a wonder-world music creates! I have lived this evening in a sphere of intellectual enjoyment raised to rapture. I never lived so fast before!' 'Do you really think so?' said Miranda. She had just finished a *beccafico*, and seemed disposed for conversation. 'Do you really think so? For my part, music is in a wholly different region from experience, thought, or feeling. What does it communicate to you?' And she hummed to herself the *motif* of Cherubino's 'Non so più cosa son cosa faccio.'—'What does it teach me?' I broke in upon the melody. 'Why, to-night, when I heard the music, and saw her there, and felt the movement of the play, it seemed to me that a new existence was revealed. For the first time I understood what love might be in one most richly gifted for emotion.' Miranda bent her eyes on the table-cloth and played with her wine-glass. 'I don't follow you at all. I enjoyed myself to-night. The opera, indeed, might have been better rendered. The ballet, I admit, was splendid. But when I remember the music—even the best of it—even Pauline Lucca's part'—here she looked up, and shot me a quick glance across the table—'I have mere music in my ears. Nothing more. Mere music!' The professor of biology, who was gifted with a sense of music and had studied it scientifically, had now crunched his last leaf of salad. Wiping his lips with his napkin, he joined our *tête-à-tête*. 'Gracious madam, I agree with you. He who seeks from music more than music gives, is on the quest—how shall I put it?—of the Holy Grail.' 'And what,' I struck in, 'is this minimum or maximum that

music gives?' 'Dear young friend,' replied the professor, 'music gives melodies, harmonies, the many beautiful forms to which sound shall be fashioned. Just as in the case of shells and fossils, lovely in themselves, interesting for their history and classification, so is it with music. You must not seek an intellectual meaning. No; there is no *Inhalt* in music.' And he hummed contentedly the air of 'Voi che sapete.' While he was humming, Miranda whispered to me across the table, 'Separate the Lucca from the music.' 'But,' I answered rather hotly, for I was nettled by Miranda's argument *ad hominem*, 'But it is not possible in an opera to divide the music from the words, the scenery, the play, the actor. Mozart, when he wrote the score to Da Ponte's libretto, was excited to production by the situations. He did not conceive his melodies out of connection with a certain cast of characters, a given ethical environment.' 'I do not know, my dear young friend,' responded the professor, 'whether you have read Mozart's Life and letters. It is clearly shown in them how he composed airs at times and seasons when he had no words to deal with. These he afterwards used as occasion served. Whence I conclude that music was for him a free and lovely play of tone. The words of our excellent Da Ponte were a scaffolding to introduce his musical creations to the public. But without that carpenter's work, the melodies of Cherubino are *Selbst-ständig*, sufficient in themselves to vindicate their place in art. Do I interpret your meaning, gracious lady?' This he said bending to Miranda. 'Yes,' she replied. But she still played with her wineglass, and did not look as though she were quite satisfied. I meanwhile continued: 'Of course I have read Mozart's Life, and know how he went to work. But Mozart was a man of feeling, of experience, of ardent passions. How can you prove to me that the melodies he gave to Cherubino had not been evolved

from situations similar to those in which Cherubino finds himself? How can you prove he did not feel a natural appropriateness in the *motifs* he selected from his memory for Cherubino? How can you be certain that the part itself did not stimulate his musical faculty to fresh and still more appropriate creativeness? And if we must fall back on documents, do you remember what he said himself about the love-music in *Die Entführung*? I think he tells us that he meant it to express his own feeling for the woman who had just become his wife.' Miranda looked up as though she were almost half-persuaded. Yet she hummed again 'Non so più,' then said to herself, 'Yes, it is wiser to believe with the professor that these are sequences of sounds, and nothing more.' Then she sighed. In the pause which followed, her husband, the famous critic, filled his glass, stretched his legs out, and began: 'You have embarked, I see, upon the ocean of æsthetics. For my part, to-night I was thinking how much better fitted for the stage Beaumarchais' play was than this musical mongrel—this operatic adaptation. The wit, observe, is lost. And Cherubino—that sparkling little *enfant terrible* —becomes a sentimental fellow—a something I don't know what—between a girl and a boy—a medley of romance and impudence—anyhow a being quite unlike the sharply outlined playwright's page. I confess I am not a musician; the drama is my business, and I judge things by their fitness for the stage. My wife agrees with me to differ. She likes music, I like plays. To-night she was better pleased than I was; for she got good music tolerably well rendered, while I got nothing but a mangled comedy.'

We bore the critic's monologue with patience. But once again the spirit, seeking after something which neither Miranda, nor her husband, nor the professor could be got to recognise, moved within me. I cried out at a venture,

'People who go to an opera must forget music pure and simple, must forget the drama pure and simple. You must welcome a third species of art, in which the play, the music, the singers with their voices, the orchestra with its instruments – Pauline Lucca, if you like, with her fascination' (and here I shot a side-glance at Miranda), 'are so blent as to create a world beyond the scope of poetry or music or acting taken by themselves. I give Mozart credit for having had insight into this new world, for having brought it near to us. And I hold that every fresh representation of his work is a fresh revelation of its possibilities.'

To this the critic answered, 'You now seem to me to be confounding the limits of the several arts.' 'What!' I continued, 'is the drama but emotion presented in its most external forms as action? And what is music but emotion, in its most genuine essence, expressed by sound? Where then can a more complete artistic harmony be found than in the opera?'

'The opera,' replied our host, 'is a hybrid. You will probably learn to dislike artistic hybrids, if you have the taste and sense I give you credit for. My own opinion has been already expressed. In the *Nozze*, Beaumarchais' *Mariage de Figaro* is simply spoiled. My friend the professor declares Mozart's music to be sufficient by itself, and the libretto to be a sort of machinery for its display. Miranda, I think, agrees with him. You plead eloquently for the hybrid. You have a right to your own view. These things are matters, in the final resort, of individual taste rather than of demonstrable principles. But I repeat that you are very young.' The critic drained his Lambrusco, and smiled at me.

'Yes, he is young,' added Miranda. 'He must learn to distinguish between music, his own imagination, and a pretty woman. At present he mixes them all up together. It is a

sort of transcendental omelette. But I think the pretty woman has more to do with it than metaphysics!'

All this while Edoardo had bestowed devout attention on his supper. But it appeared that the drift of our discourse had not been lost by him. 'Well,' he said, 'you finely fibred people dissect and analyse. I am content with the *spettacolo*. That pleases. What does a man want more? The *Nozze* is a comedy of life and manners. The music is adorable. To-night the women were not bad to look at—the Lucca was divine; the scenes—ingenious. I thought but little. I came away delighted. You could have a better play, Caro Signore!' (with a bow to our host). 'That is granted. You might have better music, Cara Signora!' (with a bow to Miranda). 'That too is granted. But when the play and the music come together—how shall I say?—the music helps the play, and the play helps the music; and we—well we, I suppose, must help both!'

Edoardo's little speech was so ingenuous, and, what is more, so true to his Italian temperament, that it made us all laugh and leave the argument just where we found it. The bottles of Lambrusco supplied us each with one more glass; and while we were drinking them, Miranda, woman-like, taking the last word, but contradicting herself, softly hummed 'Non so più cosa son,' and 'Ah!' she said, 'I shall dream of love to-night!'

We rose and said good-night. But when I had reached my bedroom in the Hôtel de la Ville, I sat down, obstinate and unconvinced, and penned this rhapsody, which I have lately found among papers of nearly twenty years ago. I give it as it stands.

III

Mozart has written the two melodramas of love—the one a melo-tragedy, the other a melo-comedy. But in really noble art, Comedy and Tragedy have faces of equal serenity and beauty. In the Vatican there are marble busts of the two Muses, differing chiefly in their head-dresses: that of Tragedy is an elaborately built-up structure of fillets and flowing hair, piled high above the forehead and descending in long curls upon the shoulders; while Comedy wears a similar adornment, with the addition of a wreath of vine-leaves and grape-bunches. The expression of the sister goddesses is no less finely discriminated. Over the mouth of Comedy plays a subtle smile, and her eyes are relaxed in a half-merriment. A shadow rests upon the slightly heavier brows of Tragedy, and her lips, though not compressed, are graver. So delicately did the Greek artist indicate the division between two branches of one dramatic art. And since all great art is classical, Mozart's two melodramas, *Don Giovanni* and the *Nozze di Figaro*, though the one is tragic and the other comic, are twin-sisters, similar in form and feature.

The central figure of the melo-tragedy is Don Juan, the hero of unlimited desire, pursuing the unattainable through tortuous interminable labyrinths, eager in appetite yet never satisfied, 'for ever following and for ever foiled.' He is the incarnation of lust that has become a habit of the soul—rebellious, licentious, selfish, even cruel. His nature, originally noble and brave, has assumed the qualities peculiar to lust—rebellion, license, cruelty, defiant egotism. Yet, such as he is, doomed to punishment and execration, Don Juan remains a fit subject for poetry and music, because he is complete, because he is impelled by some demonic influence, spurred on by yearnings after an unsearchable delight. In

his death, the spirit of chivalry survives, metamorphosed, it is true, into the spirit of revolt, yet still tragic, such as might animate the desperate sinner of a haughty breed.

The central figure of the melo-comedy is Cherubino, the genius of love, no less insatiable, but undetermined to virtue or to vice. This is the point of Cherubino, that the ethical capacities in him are still potential. His passion still hovers on the borderland of good and bad. And this undetermined passion is beautiful because of extreme freshness; of infinite, immeasurable expansibility. Cherubino is the epitome of all that belongs to the amorous temperament in a state of still ascendant adolescence. He is about sixteen years of age—a boy yesterday, a man to-morrow—to-day both and neither—something beyond boyhood, but not yet limited by man's responsibility and man's absorbing passions. He partakes of both ages in the primal awakening to self-consciousness. Desire, which in Don Juan has become a fiend, hovers before him like a fairy. His are the sixteen years, not of a Northern climate, but of Spain or Italy, where manhood appears in a flash, and overtakes the child with sudden sunrise of new faculties. *Nondum amabam, sed amare amabam, quaerebam quod amarem, amans amare*—'I loved not yet, but was in love with loving; I sought what I should love, being in love with loving.' That sentence, penned by S. Augustine and consecrated by Shelley, describes the mood of Cherubino. He loves at every moment of his life, with every pulse of his being. His object is not a beloved being, but love itself—the satisfaction of an irresistible desire, the paradise of bliss which merely loving has become for him. What love means he hardly knows. He only knows that he must love. And women love him—half as a plaything to be trifled with, half as a young god to be wounded by. This rising of the star of love as it ascends into the heaven of youthful fancy, is revealed

in the melodies Mozart has written for him. How shall we describe their potency? Who shall translate those curiously perfect words to which tone and rhythm have been indissolubly wedded? *E pur mi piace languir cosi. . . . E se non ho chi m' oda, parlo d' amor con me.*

But if this be so, it may be asked, Who shall be found worthy to act Cherubino on the stage? You cannot have seen and heard Pauline Lucca, or you would not ask this question.

Cherubino is by no means the most important person in the plot of the *Nozze*. But he strikes the keynote of the opera. His love is the standard by which we measure the sad, retrospective, stately love of the Countess, who tries to win back an alienated husband. By Cherubino we measure the libertine love of the Count, who is a kind of Don Juan without cruelty, and the humorous love of Figaro and his sprightly bride Susanna. Each of these characters typifies one of the many species of love. But Cherubino anticipates and harmonises all. They are conscious, experienced, world-worn, disillusioned, trivial. He is all love, foreseen, foreshadowed in a dream of life to be; all love, diffused through brain and heart and nerves like electricity; all love, merging the moods of ecstasy, melancholy, triumph, regret, jealousy, joy, expectation, in a hazy sheen, as of some Venetian sunrise. What will Cherubino be after three years? A Romeo, a Lovelace, a Lothario, a Juan? a disillusioned rake, a sentimentalist, an effete fop, a romantic lover? He may become any one of these, for he contains the possibilities of all. As yet, he is the dear glad angel of the May of love, the nightingale of orient emotion. This moment in the unfolding of character Mozart has arrested and eternalised for us in Cherubino's melodies; for it is the privilege of art to render things most fugitive and evanescent fixed imperishably in immortal form.

IV

This is indeed a rhapsodical production. Miranda was probably right. Had it not been for Pauline Lucca, I might not have philosophised the *Nozze* thus. Yet, in the main, I believe that my instinct was well grounded. Music, especially when wedded to words, more especially when those words are dramatic, cannot separate itself from emotion. It will not do to tell us that a melody is a certain sequence of sounds; that the composer chose it for its beauty of rhythm, form, and tune, and only used the words to get it vocalised. We are forced to go farther back, and ask ourselves, What suggested it in the first place to the composer? why did he use it precisely in connection with this dramatic situation? How can we answer these questions except by supposing that music was for him the utterance through art of some emotion? The final fact of human nature is emotion, crystallising itself in thought and language, externalising itself in action and art. 'What,' said Novalis, 'are thoughts but pale dead feelings?' Admitting this even in part, we cannot deny to music an emotional content of some kind. I would go farther, and assert that, while a merely mechanical musician may set inappropriate melodies to words, and render music inexpressive of character, what constitutes a musical dramatist is the conscious intention of fitting to the words of his libretto such melody as shall interpret character, and the power to do this with effect.

That the Cherubino of Mozart's *Nozze* is quite different from Beaumarchais' Cherubin does not affect this question. He is a new creation, just because Mozart could not, or would not, conceive the character of the page in Beaumarchais' sprightly superficial spirit. He used the part to utter something unutterable except by music about the soul of

the still adolescent lover. The libretto-part and the melodies, taken together, constitute a new romantic ideal, consistent with experience, but realised with the intensity and universality whereby art is distinguished from life. Don Juan was a myth before Mozart touched him with the magic wand of music. Cherubino became a myth by the same Prospero's spell. Both characters have the universality, the symbolic potency, which belongs to legendary beings. That there remains a discrepancy between the boy-page and the music made for him, can be conceded without danger to my theory; for the music made for Cherubino is meant to interpret his psychical condition, and is independent of his boyishness of conduct.

This further explains why there may be so many renderings of Cherubino's melodies. Mozart idealised an infinite emotion. The singer is forced to define; the actor also is forced to define. Each introduces his own limit on the feeling. When the actor and the singer meet together in one personality, this definition of emotion becomes of necessity doubly specific. The condition of all music is that it depends in a great measure on the temperament of the interpreter for its momentary shade of expression, and this dependence is of course exaggerated when the music is dramatic. Furthermore, the subjectivity of the audience enters into the problem as still another element of definition. It may therefore be fairly said that, in estimating any impression produced by Cherubino's music, the original character of the page, transplanted from French comedy to Italian opera, Mozart's conception of that character, Mozart's specific quality of emotion and specific style of musical utterance, together with the contralto's interpretation of the character and rendering of the music, according to her intellectual capacity, artistic skill, and timbre of voice, have

collaborated with the individuality of the hearer. Some of the constituents of the ever-varying product—a product which is new each time the part is played—are fixed. Da Ponte's Cherubino and Mozart's melodies remain unalterable. All the rest is undecided; the singer and the listener change on each occasion.

To assert that the musician Mozart meant nothing by his music, to assert that he only cared about it *quâ* music, is the same as to say that the painter Tintoretto, when he put the Crucifixion upon canvas, the sculptor Michelangelo, when he carved Christ upon the lap of Mary, meant nothing, and only cared about the beauty of their forms and colours. Those who take up this position prove, not that the artist has no meaning to convey, but that for them the artist's nature is unintelligible, and his meaning is conveyed in an unknown tongue. It seems superfluous to guard against misinterpretation by saying that to expect clear definition from music—the definition which belongs to poetry—would be absurd. The sphere of music is in sensuous perception; the sphere of poetry is in intelligence. Music, dealing with pure sound, must always be vaguer in significance than poetry, dealing with words. Nevertheless, its effect upon the sentient subject may be more intense and penetrating for this very reason. We cannot fail to understand what words are intended to convey; we may very easily interpret in a hundred different ways the message of sound. But this is not because words are wider in their reach and more alive; rather because they are more limited, more stereotyped, more dead. They symbolise something precise and unmistakable; but this precision is itself attenuation of the something symbolised. The exact value of the counter is better understood when it is a word than when it is a chord, because all that a word conveys has already become a thought, while all that musical

sounds convey remains within the region of emotion which has not been intellectualised. Poetry touches emotion through the thinking faculty. If music reaches the thinking faculty at all, it is through fibres of emotion. But emotion, when it has become thought, has already lost a portion of its force, and has taken to itself a something alien to its nature. Therefore the message of music can never rightly be translated into words. It is the very largeness and vividness of the sphere of simple feeling which makes its symbolical counterpart in sound so seeming vague. But in spite of this incontestable defect of seeming vagueness, emotion expressed by music is nearer to our sentient self, if we have ears to take it in, than the same emotion limited by language. It is intenser, it is more immediate, as compensation for being less intelligible, less unmistakable in meaning. It is an infinite, an indistinct, where each consciousness defines and sets a limitary form.

V

A train of thought which begins with the concrete not unfrequently finds itself finishing, almost against its will, in abstractions. This is the point to which the performance of Cherubino's part by Pauline Lucca at the Scala twenty years ago has led me—that I have to settle with myself what I mean by art in general, and what I take to be the proper function of music as one of the fine arts.

'Art,' said Goethe, 'is but form-giving.' We might vary this definition, and say, 'Art is a method of expression or presentation.' Then comes the question: If art gives form, if it is a method of expression or presentation, to what does it give form, what does it express or present? The answer certainly must be: Art gives form to human consciousness; expresses or presents the feeling or the thought of man.

Whatever else art may do by the way, in the communication of innocent pleasures, in the adornment of life and the softening of manners, in the creation of beautiful shapes and sounds, this, at all events, is its prime function.

While investing thought, the spiritual subject-matter of all art, with form, or finding for it proper modes of presentation, each of the arts employs a special medium, obeying the laws of beauty proper to that medium. The vehicles of the arts, roughly speaking, are material substances (like stone, wood, metal), pigments, sounds, and words. The masterly handling of these vehicles and the realisation of their characteristic types of beauty have come to be regarded as the craftsman's paramount concern. And in a certain sense this is a right conclusion; for dexterity in the manipulation of the chosen vehicle and power to create a beautiful object, distinguish the successful artist from the man who may have had like thoughts and feelings. This dexterity, this power, are the properties of the artist *quâ* artist. Yet we must not forget that the form created by the artist for the expression of a thought or feeling is not the final end of art itself. That form, after all, is but the mode of presentation through which the spiritual content manifests itself. Beauty, in like manner, is not the final end of art, but is the indispensable condition under which the artistic manifestation of the spiritual content must be made. It is the business of art to create an ideal world, in which perception, emotion, understanding, action, all elements of human life sublimed by thought, shall reappear in concrete forms as beauty. This being so, the logical criticism of art demands that we should not only estimate the technical skill of artists and their faculty for presenting beauty to the æsthetic sense, but that we should also ask ourselves what portion of the human spirit he has chosen to invest with form, and how he has conceived his subject. It

is not necessary that the ideas embodied in a work of art should be the artist's own. They may be common to the race and age: as, for instance, the conception of sovereign deity expressed in the Olympian Zeus of Pheidias, or the conception of divine maternity expressed in Raphael's 'Madonna di San Sisto.' Still the personality of the artist, his own intellectual and moral nature, his peculiar way of thinking and feeling, his individual attitude towards the material given to him in ideas of human consciousness, will modify his choice of subject and of form, and will determine his specific type of beauty. To take an example: supposing that an idea, common to his race and age, is given to the artist for treatment; this will be the final end of the work of art which he produces. But his personal qualities and technical performance determine the degree of success or failure to which he attains in presenting that idea and in expressing it with beauty. Signorelli fails where Perugino excels, in giving adequate and lovely form to the religious sentiment. Michelangelo is sure of the sublime, and Raphael of the beautiful.

Art is thus the presentation of the human spirit by the artist to his fellow-men. The subject-matter of the arts is commensurate with what man thinks and feels and does. It is as deep as religion, as wide as life. But what distinguishes art from religion or from life is, that this subject-matter must assume beautiful form, and must be presented directly or indirectly to the senses. Art is not the school or the cathedral, but the playground, the paradise of humanity. It does not teach, it does not preach. Nothing abstract enters into art's domain. Truth and goodness are transmuted into beauty there, just as in science beauty and goodness assume the shape of truth, and in religion truth and beauty become goodness. The rigid definitions, the unmistakable laws of science, are not to be found in art. Whatever art has touched

acquires a concrete sensuous embodiment, and thus ideas presented to the mind in art have lost a portion of their pure thought-essence. It is on this account that the religious conceptions of the Greeks were so admirably fitted for the art of sculpture, and certain portions of the mediæval Christian mythology lent themselves so well to painting. For the same reason the metaphysics of ecclesiastical dogma defy the artist's plastic faculty. Art, in a word, is a middle term between reason and the senses. Its secondary aim, after the prime end of presenting the human spirit in beautiful form has been accomplished, is to give tranquil and innocent enjoyment.

From what has gone before it will be seen that no human being can make or mould a beautiful form without incorporating in that form some portion of the human mind, however crude, however elementary. In other words, there is no work of art without a theme, without a motive, without a subject. The presentation of that theme, that motive, that subject, is the final end of art. The art is good or bad according as the subject has been well or ill presented, consistently with the laws of beauty special to the art itself. Thus we obtain two standards for æsthetic criticism. We judge a statue, for example, both by the sculptor's intellectual grasp upon his subject, and also by his technical skill and sense of beauty. In a picture of the Last Judgment by Fra Angelico we say that the bliss of the righteous has been more successfully treated than the torments of the wicked, because the former has been better understood, although the painter's skill in each is equal. In the Perseus of Cellini we admire the sculptor's spirit, finish of execution, and originality of design, while we deplore that want of sympathy with the heroic character which makes his type of physical beauty slightly vulgar and his facial expression vacuous.

If the phrase 'Art for art's sake' has any meaning, this meaning is simply that the artist, having chosen a theme, thinks exclusively in working at it of technical dexterity or the quality of beauty. There are many inducements for the artist thus to narrow his function, and for the critic to assist him by applying the canons of a soulless connoisseurship to his work; for the conception of the subject is but the starting-point in art-production, and the artist's difficulties and triumphs as a craftsman lie in the region of technicalities. He knows, moreover, that, however deep or noble his idea may be, his work of art will be worthless if it fail in skill or be devoid of beauty. What converts a thought into a statue or a picture, is the form found for it; and so the form itself seems all-important. The artist, therefore, too easily imagines that he may neglect his theme; that a fine piece of colouring, a well-balanced composition, or, as Cellini put it, 'un bel corpo ignudo,' is enough. And this is especially easy in an age which reflects much upon the arts, and pursues them with enthusiasm, while its deeper thoughts and feelings are not of the kind which translate themselves readily into artistic form. But, after all, a fine piece of colouring, a well-balanced composition, a sonorous stanza, a learned essay in counterpoint, are not enough. They are all excellent good things, yielding delight to the artistic sense and instruction to the student. Yet when we think of the really great statues, pictures, poems, music of the world, we find that these are really great because of something more—and that more is their theme, their presentation of a noble portion of the human soul. Artists and art-students may be satisfied with perfect specimens of a craftsman's skill, independent of his theme; but the mass of men will not be satisfied; and it is as wrong to suppose that art exists for artists and art-students, as to talk of art for art's sake. Art exists for

humanity. Art transmutes thought and feeling into terms of beautiful form. Art is great and lasting in proportion as it appeals to the human consciousness at large, presenting to it portions of itself in adequate and lovely form.

VI

It was necessary in the first place firmly to apprehend the truth that the final end of all art is the presentation of a spiritual content; it is necessary in the next place to remove confusions by considering the special circumstances of the several arts.

Each art has its own vehicle of presentation. What it can present and how it must present it, depends upon the nature of this vehicle. Thus, though architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, meet upon the common ground of spiritualised experience—though the works of art produced by the architect, sculptor, painter, musician, poet, emanate from the spiritual nature of the race, are coloured by the spiritual nature of the men who make them, and express what is spiritual in humanity under concrete forms invented for them by the artist—yet it is certain that all of these arts do not deal exactly with the same portions of this common material in the same way or with the same results. Each has its own department. Each exhibits qualities of strength and weakness special to itself. To define these several departments, to explain the relation of these several vehicles of presentation to the common subject-matter, is the next step in criticism.

Of the fine arts, architecture alone subserves utility. We build for use. But the geometrical proportions which the architect observes, contain the element of beauty and powerfully influence the soul. Into the language of arch and aisle and colonnade, of cupola and façade and pediment, of spire

and vault, the architect translates emotion, vague perhaps but deep, mute but unmistakable. When we say that a building is sublime or graceful, frivolous or stern, we mean that sublimity or grace, frivolity or sternness, is inherent in it. The emotions connected with these qualities are inspired in us when we contemplate it, and are presented to us by its form. Whether the architect deliberately aimed at the sublime or graceful—whether the dignified serenity of the Athenian genius sought to express itself in the Parthenon, and the mysticism of mediæval Christianity in the gloom of Chartres Cathedral—whether it was Renaissance paganism which gave its mundane pomp and glory to S. Peter's, and the refined selfishness of royalty its specious splendour to the palace of Versailles—need not be curiously questioned. The fact that we are impelled to raise these points, that architecture more almost than any art connects itself indissolubly with the life, the character, the moral being of a nation and an epoch, proves that we are justified in bringing it beneath our general definition of the arts. In a great measure because it subserves utility, and is therefore dependent upon the necessities of life, does architecture present to us through form the human spirit. Comparing the palace built by Giulio Romano for the Dukes of Mantua with the contemporary castle of a German prince, we cannot fail at once to comprehend the difference of spiritual conditions, as these displayed themselves in daily life, which then separated Italy from the Teutonic nations. But this is not all. Spiritual quality in the architect himself finds clear expression in his work. Coldness combined with violence marks Brunelleschi's churches; a certain suavity and well-bred taste the work of Bramante; while Michelangelo exhibits wayward energy in his Library of S. Lorenzo, and Amadeo self-abandonment to fancy in his Lombard chapels. I have chosen examples from

one nation and one epoch in order that the point I seek to make, the demonstration of a spiritual quality in buildings, may be fairly stated.

Sculpture and painting distinguish themselves from the other fine arts by the imitation of concrete existences in nature. They copy the bodies of men and animals, the aspects of the world around us, and the handiwork of men. Yet, in so far as they are rightly arts, they do not make imitation an object in itself. The grapes of Zeuxis at which birds pecked, the painted dog at which a cat's hair bristles—if such grapes or such a dog were ever put on canvas—are but evidences of the artist's skill, not of his faculty as artist. These two plastic, or, as I prefer to call them, figurative arts, use their imitation of the external world for the expression, the presentation of internal, spiritual things. The human form is for them the outward symbol of the inner human spirit, and their power of presenting spirit is limited by the means at their disposal.

Sculpture employs stone, wood, clay, the precious metals, to model forms, detached and independent, or raised upon a flat surface in relief. Its domain is the whole range of human character and consciousness, in so far as these can be indicated by fixed facial expression, by physical type, and by attitude. If we dwell for an instant on the greatest historical epoch of sculpture, we shall understand the domain of this art in its range and limitation. At a certain point of Greek development the Hellenic Pantheon began to be translated by the sculptors into statues; and when the genius of the Greeks expired in Rome, the cycle of their pyschological conceptions had been exhaustively presented through this medium. During that long period of time, the most delicate gradations of human personality, divinised, idealised, were

presented to the contemplation of the consciousness which gave them being, in appropriate types. Strength and swiftness, massive force and airy lightness, contemplative repose and active energy, voluptuous softness and refined grace, intellectual sublimity and lascivious seductiveness—the whole rhythm of qualities which can be typified by bodily form —were analysed, selected, combined in various degrees, to incarnate the religious conceptions of Zeus, Aphrodite, Herakles, Dionysus, Pallas, Fauns and Satyrs, Nymphs of woods and waves, Tritons, the genius of Death, heroes and hunters, lawgivers and poets, presiding deities of minor functions, man's lustful appetites and sensual needs. All that men think, or do, or are, or wish for, or imagine in this world, had found exact corporeal equivalents. Not physiognomy alone, but all the portions of the body upon which the habits of the animating soul are wont to stamp themselves, were studied and employed as symbolism. Uranian Aphrodite was distinguished from her Pandemic sister by chastened lust-repelling loveliness. The muscles of Herakles were more ponderous than the tense sinews of Achilles. The Hermes of the palæstra bore a torso of majestic depth; the Hermes, who carried messages from heaven, had limbs alert for movement. The brows of Zeus inspired awe; the breasts of Dionysus breathed delight.

A race accustomed, as the Greeks were, to read this symbolism, accustomed, as the Greeks were, to note the individuality of naked form, had no difficulty in interpreting the language of sculpture. Nor is there now much difficulty in the task. Our surest guide to the subject of a basrelief or statue is study of the physical type considered as symbolical of spiritual quality. From the fragment of a torso the true critic can say whether it belongs to the athletic or the erotic species. A limb of Bacchus differs from a limb of Poseidon.

The whole psychological conception of Aphrodite Pandemos enters into every muscle, every joint, no less than into her physiognomy, her hair, her attitude.

There is, however, a limit to the domain of sculpture. This art deals most successfully with personified generalities. It is also strong in the presentation of incarnate character. But when it attempts to tell a story, we often seek in vain its meaning. Battles of Amazons or Centaurs upon basreliefs, indeed, are unmistakable. The subject is indicated here by some external sign. The group of Laocoon appeals at once to a reader of Virgil, and the divine vengeance of Leto's children upon Niobe is manifest in the Uffizzi marbles. But who are the several heroes of the Æginetan pediment, and what was the subject of the Pheidian statues on the Parthenon? Do the three graceful figures of a basrelief which exists at Naples and in the Villa Albani, represent Orpheus, Hermes, and Eurydice, or Antiope and her two sons? Was the winged and sworded genius upon the Ephesus column meant for a genius of Death or a genius of Love?

This dimness of significance indicates the limitation of sculpture, and inclines some of those who feel its charm to assert that the sculptor seeks to convey no intellectual meaning, that he is satisfied with the creation of beautiful form. There is sense in this revolt against the faith which holds that art is nothing but a mode of spiritual presentation. Truly the artist aims at producing beauty, is satisfied if he conveys delight. But it is impossible to escape from the certainty that, while he is creating forms of beauty, he means something; and that something, that theme for which he finds the form, is part of the world's spiritual heritage. Only the crudest works of plastic art, capricci and arabesques, have no intellectual content; and even these are good in so far as they convey the playfulness of fancy.

Painting employs colours upon surfaces—walls, panels, canvas. What has been said about sculpture will apply in a great measure to this art. The human form, the world around us, the works of man's hands, are represented in painting, not for their own sake merely, but with a view to bringing thought, feeling, action, home to the consciousness of the spectator from the artist's consciousness on which they have been impressed. Painting can tell a story better than sculpture, can represent more complicated feelings, can suggest thoughts of a subtler intricacy. Through colour, it can play, like music, directly on powerful but vague emotion. It is deficient in fulness and roundness of concrete reality. A statue stands before us, the soul incarnate in ideal form, fixed and frozen for eternity. The picture is a reflection cast upon a magic glass; not less permanent, but reduced to a shadow of reality. To follow these distinctions farther would be alien from the present purpose. It is enough to repeat that, within their several spheres, according to their several strengths and weaknesses, both sculpture and painting present the spirit to us only as the spirit shows itself immersed in things of sense. The light of a lamp enclosed within an alabaster vase is still lamplight, though shorn of lustre and toned to coloured softness. Even thus the spirit, immersed in things of sense presented to us by the figurative arts, is still spirit, though diminished in its intellectual clearness and invested with hues not its own. To fashion that alabaster form of art with utmost skill, to make it beautiful, to render it transparent, is the artist's function. But he will have failed of the highest if the light within burns dim, or if he gives the world a lamp in which no spiritual flame is lighted.

Music transports us to a different region. It imitates nothing. It uses pure sound, and sound of the most wholly

artificial kind—so artificial that the musical sounds of one race are unmusical, and therefore unintelligible, to another. Like architecture, music relies upon mathematical proportions. Unlike architecture, music serves no utility. It is the purest art of pleasure—the truest paradise and playground of the spirit. It has less power than painting, even less power than sculpture, to tell a story or to communicate an idea. For we must remember that when music is married to words, the words, and not the music, reach our thinking faculty. And yet, in spite of all, music presents man's spirit to itself through form. The domain of the spirit over which music reigns, is emotion—not defined emotion, not feeling even so defined as jealousy or anger—but those broad bases of man's being out of which emotions spring, defining themselves through action into this or that set type of feeling. Architecture, we have noticed, is so connected with specific modes of human existence, that from its main examples we can reconstruct the life of men who used it. Sculpture and painting, by limiting their presentation to the imitation of external things, have all the help which experience and association render. The mere artificiality of music's vehicle separates it from life and makes its message untranslatable. Yet, as I have already pointed out, this very disability under which it labours is the secret of its extraordinary potency. Nothing intervenes between the musical work of art and the fibres of the sentient being it immediately thrills. We do not seek to say what music means. We feel the music. And if a man should pretend that the music has not passed beyond his ears, has communicated nothing but a musical delight, he simply tells us that he has not felt music. The ancients on this point were wiser than some moderns when, without pretending to assign an intellectual significance to music, they held it for an axiom that one type of music bred one type of character,

another type another. A change in the music of a state, wrote Plato, will be followed by changes in its constitution. It is of the utmost importance, said Aristotle, to provide in education for the use of the ennobling and the fortifying moods. These philosophers knew that music creates a spiritual world, in which the spirit cannot live and move without contracting habits of emotion. In this vagueness of significance but intensity of feeling lies the magic of music. A melody occurs to the composer, which he certainly connects with no act of the reason, which he is probably unconscious of connecting with any movement of his feeling, but which nevertheless is the form in sound of an emotional mood. When he reflects upon the melody secreted thus impromptu, he is aware, as we learn from his own lips, that this work has correspondence with emotion. Beethoven calls one symphony Heroic, another Pastoral; of the opening of another he says, 'Fate knocks at the door.' Mozart sets comic words to the mass-music of a friend, in order to mark his sense of its inaptitude for religious sentiment. All composers use phrases like Maestoso, Pomposo, Allegro, Lagrimoso, Con Fuoco, to express the general complexion of the mood their music ought to represent.

Before passing to poetry, it may be well to turn aside and consider two subordinate arts, which deserve a place in any system of æsthetics. These are dancing and acting. Dancing uses the living human form, and presents feeling or action, the passions and the deeds of men, in artificially educated movements of the body. The element of beauty it possesses, independently of the beauty of the dancer, is rhythm. Acting or the art of mimicry presents the same subject-matter, no longer under the conditions of fixed rhythm, but as an ideal reproduction of reality. The actor is

what he represents, and the element of beauty in his art is perfection of realisation. It is his duty as an artist to show us Orestes or Othello, not perhaps exactly as Othello and Orestes were, but as the essence of their tragedies, ideally incorporate in action, ought to be. The actor can do this in dumb show. Some of the greatest actors of the ancient world were mimes. But he usually interprets a poet's thought, and attempts to present an artistic conception in a secondary form of art, which has for its advantage his own personality in play.

The last of the fine arts is literature ; or, in the narrower sphere of which it will be well to speak here only, is poetry. Poetry employs words in fixed rhythms, which we call metres. Only a small portion of its effect is derived from the beauty of its sound. It appeals to the sense of hearing far less immediately than music does. It makes no appeal to the eyesight, and takes no help from the beauty of colour. It produces no tangible object. But language being the store-house of all human experience, language being the medium whereby spirit communicates with spirit in affairs of life, the vehicle which transmits to us the thoughts and feelings of the past, and on which we rely for continuing our present to the future, it follows that, of all the arts, poetry soars highest, flies widest, and is most at home in the region of the spirit. What poetry lacks of sensuous fulness, it more than balances by intellectual intensity. Its significance is unmistakable, because it employs the very material men use in their exchange of thoughts and correspondence of emotions. To the bounds of its empire there is no end. It embraces in its own more abstract being all the arts. By words it does the work in turn of architecture, sculpture, painting, music. It is the metaphysic of the fine arts. Philosophy finds place in

poetry; and life itself, refined to its last utterance, hangs trembling on this thread which joins our earth to heaven, this bridge between experience and the realms where unattainable and imperceptible will have no meaning.

If we are right in defining art as the manifestation of the human spirit to man by man in beautiful form, poetry, more incontestably than any other art, fulfils this definition and enables us to gauge its accuracy. For words are the spirit, manifested to itself in symbols with no sensual alloy. Poetry is therefore the presentation, through words, of life and all that life implies. Perception, emotion, thought, action, find in descriptive, lyrical, reflective, dramatic, and epical poetry their immediate apocalypse. In poetry we are no longer puzzled with problems as to whether art has or has not of necessity a spiritual content. There cannot be any poetry whatsoever without a spiritual meaning of some sort: good or bad, moral, immoral, or non-moral, obscure or lucid, noble or ignoble, slight or weighty—such distinctions do not signify. In poetry we are not met by questions whether the poet intended to convey a meaning when he made it. Quite meaningless poetry (as some critics would fain find melody quite meaningless, or a statue meaningless, or a Venetian picture meaningless) is a contradiction in terms. In poetry, life, or a portion of life, lives again, resuscitated and presented to our mental faculty through art. The best poetry is that which reproduces the most of life, or its intensest moments. Therefore the extensive species of the drama and the epic, the intensive species of the lyric, have been ever held in highest esteem. Only a half-crazy critic flaunts the paradox that poetry is excellent in so far as it assimilates the vagueness of music, or estimates a poet by his power of translating sense upon the borderland of nonsense into melodious words. Where poetry falls short in the comparison with other arts, is

in the quality of form-giving, in the quality of sensuous concreteness. Poetry can only present forms to the mental eye and to the intellectual sense, stimulate the physical senses by indirect suggestion. Therefore dramatic poetry, the most complicated kind of poetry, relies upon the actor; and lyrical poetry, the intensest kind of poetry, seeks the aid of music. But these comparative deficiencies are overbalanced, for all the highest purposes of art, by the width and depth, the intelligibility and power, the flexibility and multitudinous associations, of language. The other arts are limited in what they utter. There is nothing which has entered into the life of man which poetry cannot express. Poetry says everything in man's own language to the mind. The other arts appeal imperatively, each in its own region, to man's senses; and the mind receives art's message by the help of symbols from the world of sense. Poetry lacks this immediate appeal to sense. But the elixir which it offers to the mind, its quintessence extracted from all things of sense, reacts through intellectual perception upon all the faculties that make men what they are.

VII

I used a metaphor in one of the foregoing paragraphs to indicate the presence of the vital spirit, the essential element of thought or feeling, in the work of art. I said it radiated through the form, as lamplight through an alabaster vase. Now the skill of the artist is displayed in modelling that vase, in giving it shape, rich and rare, and fashioning its curves with subtlest workmanship. In so far as he is a craftsman, the artist's pains must be bestowed upon this precious vessel of the animating theme. In so far as he has power over beauty, he must exert it in this plastic act. It is here that he displays dexterity; here that he creates; here that he

separates himself from other men who think and feel. The poet, more perhaps than any other artist, needs to keep this steadily in view; for words being our daily vehicle of utterance, it may well chance that the alabaster vase of language should be hastily or trivially modelled. This is the true reason why 'neither gods nor men nor the columns either suffer mediocrity in singers.' Upon the poet it is specially incumbent to see that he has something rare to say and some rich mode of saying it. The figurative arts need hardly be so cautioned. They run their risk in quite a different direction. For sculptor and for painter, the danger is lest he should think that alabaster vase his final task. He may too easily be satisfied with moulding a beautiful but empty form.

The last word on the topic of the arts is given in one sentence. Let us remember that every work of art enshrines a spiritual subject, and that the artist's power is shown in finding for that subject a form of ideal loveliness. Many kindred points remain to be discussed; as what we mean by beauty, which is a condition indispensable to noble art; and what are the relations of the arts to ethics. These questions cannot now be raised. It is enough in one essay to have tried to vindicate the spirituality of art in general.

A VENETIAN MEDLEY

I.—First Impressions and Familiarity

It is easy to feel and to say something obvious about Venice. The influence of this sea-city is unique, immediate, and unmistakable. But to express the sober truth of those impressions which remain when the first astonishment of the Venetian revelation has subsided, when the spirit of the place has been harmonised through familiarity with our habitual mood, is difficult.

Venice inspires at first an almost Corybantic rapture. From our earliest visits, if these have been measured by days rather than weeks, we carry away with us the memory of sunsets emblazoned in gold and crimson upon cloud and water; of violet domes and bell-towers etched against the orange of a western sky; of moonlight silvering breeze-rippled breadths of liquid blue; of distant islands shimmering in sun-litten haze; of music and black gliding boats; of labyrinthine darkness made for mysteries of love and crime; of statue-fretted palace fronts; of brazen clangour and a moving crowd; of pictures by earth's proudest painters, cased in gold on walls of council chambers where Venice sat enthroned a queen, where nobles swept the floors with robes of Tyrian brocade. These reminiscences will be attended by an ever-present sense of loneliness and silence in the world around; the sadness of a limitless horizon, the solemnity of an unbroken arch of heaven, the calm and greyness of evening on the lagoons,

the pathos of a marble city crumbling to its grave in mud and brine.

These first impressions of Venice are true. Indeed they are inevitable. They abide, and form a glowing background for all subsequent pictures, toned more austerely, and painted in more lasting hues of truth upon the brain. Those have never felt Venice at all who have not known this primal rapture, or who perhaps expected more of colour, more of melodrama, from a scene which nature and the art of man have made the richest in these qualities. Yet the mood engendered by this first experience is not destined to be permanent. It contains an element of unrest and unreality which vanishes upon familiarity. From the blare of that triumphal bourdon of brass instruments emerge the delicate voices of violin and clarinette. To the contrasted passions of our earliest love succeed a multitude of sweet and fanciful emotions. It is my present purpose to recapture some of the impressions made by Venice in more tranquil moods. Memory might be compared to a kaleidoscope. Far away from Venice I raise the wonder-working tube, allow the glittering fragments to settle as they please, and with words attempt to render something of the patterns I behold.

II.—A Lodging in San Vio

I have escaped from the hotels with their bustle of tourists and crowded *tables-d'hôte*. My garden stretches down to the Grand Canal, closed at the end with a pavilion, where I lounge and smoke and watch the cornice of the Prefettura fretted with gold in sunset light. My sitting-room and bedroom face the southern sun. There is a canal below, crowded with gondolas, and across its bridge the good folk of San Vio come and go the whole day long—men in blue shirts with

enormous hats, and jackets slung on their left shoulder; women in kerchiefs of orange and crimson. Barelegged boys sit upon the parapet, dangling their feet above the rising tide. A hawker passes, balancing a basket full of live and crawling crabs. Barges filled with Brenta water or Mirano wine take up their station at the neighbouring steps, and then ensues a mighty splashing and hurrying to and fro of men with tubs upon their heads. The brawny fellows in the wine-barge are red from brows to breast with drippings of the vat. And now there is a bustle in the quarter. A *barca* has arrived from S. Erasmo, the island of the market-gardens. It is piled with gourds and pumpkins, cabbages and tomatoes, pomegranates and pears—a pyramid of gold and green and scarlet. Brown men lift the fruit aloft, and women bending from the pathway bargain for it. A clatter of chaffering tongues, a ring of coppers, a Babel of hoarse sea-voices, proclaim the sharpness of the struggle. When the quarter has been served, the boat sheers off diminished in its burden. Boys and girls are left seasoning their polenta with a slice of *zucca*, while the mothers of a score of families go pattering up yonder courtyard with the material for their husbands' supper in their handkerchiefs. Across the canal, or more correctly the *Rio*, opens a wide grass-grown court. It is lined on the right hand by a row of poor dwellings, swarming with gondoliers' children. A garden wall runs along the other side, over which I can see pomegranate-trees in fruit and pergolas of vines. Far beyond are more low houses, and then the sky, swept with sea-breezes, and the masts of an ocean-going ship against the dome and turrets of Palladio's Redentore.

This is my home. By day it is as lively as a scene in *Masaniello*. By night, after nine o'clock, the whole stir of the quarter has subsided. Far away I hear the bell of some church tell the hours. But no noise disturbs my rest, unless

perhaps a belated gondolier moors his boat beneath the window. My one maid, Catina, sings at her work the whole day through. My gondolier, Francesco, acts as valet. He wakes me in the morning, opens the shutters, brings sea-water for my bath, and takes his orders for the day. 'Will it do for Chioggia, Francesco?' 'Sissignore! The Signorino has set off in his *sandolo* already with Antonio. The Signora is to go with us in the gondola.' 'Then get three more men, Francesco, and see that all of them can sing.'

III.—To Chioggia with Oar and Sail

The *sandolo* is a boat shaped like the gondola, but smaller and lighter, without benches, and without the high steel prow or *ferro* which distinguishes the gondola. The gunwale is only just raised above the water, over which the little craft skims with a rapid bounding motion, affording an agreeable variation from the stately swanlike movement of the gondola. In one of these boats—called by him the *Fisolo* or Seamew—my friend Eustace had started with Antonio, intending to row the whole way to Chioggia, or, if the breeze favoured, to hoist a sail and help himself along. After breakfast, when the crew for my gondola had been assembled, Francesco and I followed with the Signora. It was one of those perfect mornings which occur as a respite from broken weather, when the air is windless and the light falls soft through haze on the horizon. As we broke into the lagoon behind the Redentore, the islands in front of us, S. Spirito, Poveglia, Malamocco, seemed as though they were just lifted from the sea-line. The Euganeans, far away to westward, were bathed in mist, and almost blent with the blue sky. Our four rowers put their backs into their work; and soon we reached the port of Malamocco, where a breeze from the

Adriatic caught us sideways for a while. This is the largest of the breaches in the Lidi, or raised sand-reefs, which protect Venice from the sea: it affords an entrance to vessels of draught like the steamers of the Peninsular and Oriental Company. We crossed the dancing wavelets of the port; but when we passed under the lee of Pelestrina, the breeze failed, and the lagoon was once again a sheet of undulating glass. At S. Pietro on this island a halt was made to give the oarsmen wine, and here we saw the women at their cottage doorways making lace. The old lace industry of Venice has recently been revived. From Burano and Pelestrina cargoes of hand-made imitations of the ancient fabrics are sent at intervals to Jesurun's magazine at S. Marco. He is the chief *impresario* of the trade, employing hundreds of hands, and speculating for a handsome profit in the foreign market on the price he gives his workwomen.

Now we are well lost in the lagoons—Venice no longer visible behind; the Alps and Euganeans shrouded in a noonday haze; the lowlands at the mouth of Brenta marked by clumps of trees ephemerally faint in silver silhouette against the filmy, shimmering horizon. Form and colour have disappeared in light-irradiated vapour of an opal hue. And yet instinctively we know that we are not at sea; the different quality of the water, the piles emerging here and there above the surface, the suggestion of coast-lines scarcely felt in this infinity of lustre, all remind us that our voyage is confined to the charmed limits of an inland lake. At length the jutting headland of Pelestrina was reached. We broke across the Porto di Chioggia, and saw Chioggia itself ahead—a huddled mass of houses low upon the water. One by one, as we rowed steadily, the fishing-boats passed by, emerging from their harbour for a twelve hours' cruise upon the open sea. In a long line they came, with variegated sails of orange, red, and

saffron, curiously chequered at the corners, and cantled with devices in contrasted tints. A little land-breeze carried them forward. The lagoon reflected their deep colours till they reached the port. Then, slightly swerving eastward on their course, but still in single file, they took the sea and scattered, like beautiful bright-plumaged birds, who from a streamlet float into a lake, and find their way at large according as each wills.

The Signorino and Antonio, though want of wind obliged them to row the whole way from Venice, had reached Chioggia an hour before, and stood waiting to receive us on the quay. It is a quaint town this Chioggia, which has always lived a separate life from that of Venice. Language and race and customs have held the two populations apart from those distant years when Genoa and the Republic of S. Mark fought their duel to the death out in the Chioggian harbours, down to these days, when your Venetian gondolier will tell you that the Chioggoto loves his pipe more than his *donna* or his wife. The main canal is lined with substantial palaces, attesting to old wealth and comfort. But from Chioggia, even more than from Venice, the tide of modern luxury and traffic has retreated. The place is left to fishing folk and builders of the fishing craft, whose wharves still form the liveliest quarter. Wandering about its wide deserted courts and *calli*, we feel the spirit of the decadent Venetian nobility. Passages from Goldoni's and Casanova's Memoirs occur to our memory. It seems easy to realise what they wrote about the dishevelled gaiety and lawless license of Chioggia in the days of powder, sword-knot, and *soprani*. Baffo walks beside us in hypocritical composure of bag-wig and senatorial dignity, whispering unmentionable sonnets in his dialect of *Xe* and *Ga*. Somehow or another that last dotage of S. Mark's decrepitude is more recoverable by our fancy than the heroism of Pisani in the fourteenth century.

From his prison in blockaded Venice the great admiral was sent forth on a forlorn hope, and blocked victorious Doria here with boats on which the nobles of the Golden Book had spent their fortunes. Pietro Doria boasted that with his own hands he would bridle the bronze horses of S. Mark. But now he found himself between the navy of Carlo Zeno in the Adriatic and the flotilla led by Vittore Pisani across the lagoon. It was in vain that the Republic of S. George strained every nerve to send him succour from the Ligurian sea; in vain that the lords of Padua kept opening communications with him from the mainland. From the 1st of January 1380 till the 21st of June the Venetians pressed the blockade ever closer, grappling their foemen in a grip that if relaxed one moment would have hurled him at their throats. The long and breathless struggle ended in the capitulation at Chioggia of what remained of Doria's forty-eight galleys and fourteen thousand men.

These great deeds are far away and hazy. The brief sentences of mediæval annalists bring them less near to us than the *chroniques scandaleuses* of good-for-nothing scoundrels, whose vulgar adventures might be revived at the present hour with scarce a change of setting. Such is the force of *intimité* in literature. And yet Baffo and Casanova are as much of the past as Doria and Pisani. It is only perhaps that the survival of decadence in all we see around us, forms a fitting framework for our recollections of their vividly described corruption.

Not far from the landing-place a balustraded bridge of ample breadth and large bravura manner spans the main canal. Like everything at Chioggia, it is dirty and has fallen from its first estate. Yet neither time nor injury can obliterate style or wholly degrade marble. Hard by the bridge there are two rival inns. At one of these we ordered a sea-

dinner—crabs, cuttlefishes, soles, and turbots—which we ate at a table in the open air. Nothing divided us from the street except a row of Japanese privet-bushes in hooped tubs. Our banquet soon assumed a somewhat unpleasant similitude to that of Dives; for the Chioggoti, in all stages of decrepitude and squalor, crowded round to beg for scraps—indescribable old women, enveloped in their own petticoats thrown over their heads; girls hooded with sombre black mantles; old men wrinkled beyond recognition by their nearest relatives; jabbering, half-naked boys; slow, slouching fishermen with clay pipes in their mouths and philosophical acceptance on their sober foreheads.

That afternoon the gondola and sandolo were lashed together side by side. Two sails were raised, and in this lazy fashion we stole homewards, faster or slower according as the breeze freshened or slackened, landing now and then on islands, sauntering along the sea-walls which bulwark Venice from the Adriatic, and singing—those at least of us who had the power to sing. Four of our Venetians had trained voices and memories of inexhaustible music. Over the level water, with the ripple plashing at our keel, their songs went abroad, and mingled with the failing day. The barcaroles and serenades peculiar to Venice were, of course, in harmony with the occasion. But some transcripts from classical operas were even more attractive, through the dignity with which these men invested them. By the peculiarity of their treatment the *recitativo* of the stage assumed a solemn movement, marked in rhythm, which removed it from the commonplace into antiquity, and made me understand how cultivated music may pass back by natural, unconscious transition into the realm of popular melody.

The sun sank, not splendidly, but quietly in banks of clouds above the Alps. Stars came out, uncertainly at first,

and then in strength, reflected on the sea. The men of the Dogana watch-boat challenged us and let us pass. Madonna's lamp was twinkling from her shrine upon the harbour-pile. The city grew before us. Stealing into Venice in that calm —stealing silently and shadowlike, with scarce a ruffle of the water, the masses of the town emerging out of darkness into twilight, till San Giorgio's gun boomed with a flash athwart our stern, and the gas-lamps of the Piazzetta swam into sight; all this was like a long enchanted chapter of romance. And now the music of our men had sunk to one faint whistling from Eustace of tunes in harmony with whispers at the prow.

Then came the steps of the Palazzo Venier and the deep-scented darkness of the garden. As we passed through to supper, I plucked a spray of yellow Banksia rose, and put it in my buttonhole. The dew was on its burnished leaves, and evening had drawn forth its perfume.

IV.—Morning Rambles

A story is told of Poussin, the French painter, that when he was asked why he would not stay in Venice, he replied, 'If I stay here, I shall become a colourist!' A somewhat similar tale is reported of a fashionable English decorator. While on a visit to friends in Venice, he avoided every building which contains a Tintoretto, averring that the sight of Tintoretto's pictures would injure his carefully trained taste. It is probable that neither anecdote is strictly true. Yet there is a certain epigrammatic point in both; and I have often speculated whether even Venice could have so warped the genius of Poussin as to shed one ray of splendour on his canvases, or whether even Tintoretto could have so

sublimed the prophet of Queen Anne as to make him add dramatic passion to a London drawing-room. Anyhow, it is exceedingly difficult to escape from colour in the air of Venice, or from Tintoretto in her buildings. Long, delightful mornings may be spent in the enjoyment of the one and the pursuit of the other by folk who have no classical or pseudo-mediæval theories to oppress them.

Tintoretto's house, though changed, can still be visited. It formed part of the Fondamenta dei Mori, so called from having been the quarter assigned to Moorish traders in Venice. A spirited carving of a turbaned Moor leading a camel charged with merchandise, remains above the water-line of a neighbouring building; and all about the crumbling walls sprout flowering weeds—samphire and snapdragon and the spiked campanula, which shoots a spire of sea-blue stars from chinks of Istrian stone.

The house stands opposite the Church of Santa Maria dell' Orto, where Tintoretto was buried, and where four of his chief masterpieces are to be seen. This church, swept and garnished, is a triumph of modern Italian restoration. They have contrived to make it as commonplace as human ingenuity could manage. Yet no malice of ignorant industry can obscure the treasures it contains—the pictures of Cima, Gian Bellini, Palma, and the four Tintorettos, which form its crowning glory. Here the master may be studied in four of his chief moods: as the painter of tragic passion and movement, in the huge 'Last Judgment;' as the painter of impossibilities, in the 'Vision of Moses upon Sinai;' as the painter of purity and tranquil pathos, in the 'Miracle of S. Agnes;' as the painter of Biblical history brought home to daily life, in the 'Presentation of the Virgin.' Without leaving the Madonna dell' Orto, a student can explore his genius in all its depth and breadth; comprehend the enthusiasm he

excites in those who seek, as the essentials of art, imaginative boldness and sincerity; understand what is meant by adversaries who maintain that, after all, Tintoretto was but an inspired Gustave Doré. Between that quiet canvas of the 'Presentation,' so modest in its cool greys and subdued gold, and the tumult of flying, ruining, ascending figures in the 'Judgment,' what an interval there is! How strangely the white lamb-like maiden, kneeling beside her lamb in the picture of S. Agnes, contrasts with the dusky gorgeousness of the Hebrew women despoiling themselves of jewels for the golden calf! Comparing these several manifestations of creative power, we feel ourselves in the grasp of a painter who was essentially a poet, one for whom his art was the medium for expressing before all things thought and passion. Each picture is executed in the manner suited to its tone of feeling, the key of its conception.

Elsewhere than in the Madonna dell' Orto there are more distinguished single examples of Tintoretto's realising faculty. The 'Last Supper' in San Giorgio, for instance, and the 'Adoration of the Shepherds' in the Scuola di San Rocco illustrate his unique power of presenting sacred history in a novel, romantic framework of familiar things. The commonplace circumstances of ordinary life have been employed to portray in the one case a lyric of mysterious splendour; in the other, an idyll of infinite sweetness. Divinity shines through the rafters of that upper chamber, where round a low large table the Apostles are assembled in a group translated from the social customs of the painter's days. Divinity is shed upon the straw-spread manger, where Christ lies sleeping in the loft, with shepherds crowding through the room beneath.

A studied contrast between the simplicity and repose of the central figure and the tumult of passions in the multitude

around, may be observed in the 'Miracle of S. Agnes.' It is this which gives dramatic vigour to the composition. But the same effect is carried to its highest fulfilment, with even a loftier beauty, in the episode of Christ before the judgment-seat of Pilate, at San Rocco. Of all Tintoretto's religious pictures, that is the most profoundly felt, the most majestic. No other artist succeeded as he has here succeeded in presenting to us God incarnate. For this Christ is not merely the just man, innocent, silent before his accusers. The stationary, white-draped figure, raised high above the agitated crowd, with tranquil forehead slightly bent, facing his perplexed and fussy judge, is more than man. We cannot say perhaps precisely why he is divine. But Tintoretto has made us feel that he is. In other words, his treatment of the high theme chosen by him has been adequate.

We must seek the Scuola di San Rocco for examples of Tintoretto's liveliest imagination. Without ceasing to be Italian in his attention to harmony and grace, he far exceeded the masters of his nation in the power of suggesting what is weird, mysterious, upon the borderland of the grotesque. And of this quality there are three remarkable instances in the Scuola. No one but Tintoretto could have evoked the fiend in his 'Temptation of Christ.' It is an indescribable hermaphroditic genius, the genius of carnal fascination, with outspread downy rose-plumed wings, and flaming bracelets on the full but sinewy arms, who kneels and lifts aloft great stones, smiling entreatingly to the sad, grey Christ seated beneath a rugged pent-house of the desert. No one again but Tintoretto could have dashed the hot lights of that fiery sunset in such quivering flakes upon the golden flesh of Eve, half hidden among laurels, as she stretches forth the fruit of the Fall to shrinking Adam. No one but Tintoretto, till we come to Blake, could have imagined yonder Jonah, summoned

by the beck of God from the whale's belly. The monstrous fish rolls over in the ocean, blowing portentous vapour from his trump-shaped nostril. The prophet's beard descends upon his naked breast in hoary ringlets to the girdle. He has forgotten the past peril of the deep, although the whale's jaws yawn around him. Between him and the outstretched finger of Jehovah calling him again to life, there runs a spark of unseen spiritual electricity.

To comprehend Tintoretto's touch upon the pastoral idyll we must turn our steps to San Giorgio again, and pace those meadows by the running river in company with his Manna-Gatherers. Or we may seek the Accademia, and notice how he here has varied the 'Temptation of Adam by Eve,' choosing a less tragic motive of seduction than the one so powerfully rendered at San Rocco. Or in the Ducal Palace we may take our station, hour by hour, before the 'Marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne.' It is well to leave the very highest achievements of art untouched by criticism, undescribed. And in this picture we have the most perfect of all modern attempts to realise an antique myth—more perfect than Raphael's 'Galatea,' or Titian's 'Meeting of Bacchus with Ariadne,' or Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus from the Sea.' It may suffice to marvel at the slight effect which melodies so powerful and so direct as these produce upon the ordinary public. Sitting, as is my wont, one Sunday morning, opposite the 'Bacchus,' four Germans with a cicerone sauntered by. The subject was explained to them. They waited an appreciable space of time. Then the youngest opened his lips and spake: 'Bacchus war der Wein-Gott.' And they all moved heavily away. *Bos locutus est.* 'Bacchus was the wine-god!' This, apparently, is what a picture tells to one man. To another it presents divine harmonies, perceptible indeed in nature, but here by the painter-poet for the first time brought

together and cadenced in a work of art. For another it is perhaps the hieroglyph of pent-up passions and desired impossibilities. For yet another it may only mean the unapproachable inimitable triumph of consummate craft.

Tintoretto, to be rightly understood, must be sought all over Venice—in the church as well as the Scuola di San Rocco; in the 'Temptation of S. Anthony' at S. Trovaso no less than in the Temptations of Eve and Christ; in the decorative pomp of the Sala del Senato, and in the Paradisal vision of the Sala del Gran Consiglio. Yet, after all, there is one of his most characteristic moods, to appreciate which fully we return to the Madonna dell' Orto. I have called him 'the painter of impossibilities.' At rare moments he rendered them possible by sheer imaginative force. If we wish to realise this phase of his creative power, and to measure our own subordination to his genius in its most hazardous enterprise, we must spend much time in the choir of this church. Lovers of art who mistrust this play of the audacious fancy—aiming at sublimity in supersensual regions, sometimes attaining to it by stupendous effort or authentic revelation, not seldom sinking to the verge of bathos, and demanding the assistance of interpretative sympathy in the spectator—such men will not take the point of view required of them by Tintoretto in his boldest flights, in the 'Worship of the Golden Calf' and in the 'Destruction of the World by Water.' It is for them to ponder well the flying archangel with the scales of judgment in his hand, and the seraph-charioted Jehovah enveloping Moses upon Sinai in lightnings.

The gondola has had a long rest. Were Francesco but a little more impatient, he might be wondering what had become of the padrone. I bid him turn, and we are soon gliding into the Sacca della Misericordia. This is a protected float, where the wood which comes from Cadore and the hills of the

Ampezzo is stored in spring. Yonder square white house, standing out to sea, fronting Murano and the Alps, they call the Casa degli Spiriti. No one cares to inhabit it; for here, in old days, it was the wont of the Venetians to lay their dead for a night's rest before their final journey to the graveyard of S. Michele. So many generations of dead folk had made that house their inn, that it is now no fitting home for living men. San Michele is the island close before Murano, where the Lombardi built one of their most romantically graceful churches of pale Istrian stone, and where the Campo Santo has for centuries received the dead into its oozy clay. The cemetery is at present undergoing restoration. Its state of squalor and abandonment to cynical disorder makes one feel how fitting for Italians would be the custom of cremation. An island in the lagoons devoted to funeral pyres is a solemn and ennobling conception. This graveyard, with its ruinous walls, its mangy riot of unwholesome weeds, its corpses festering in slime beneath neglected slabs in hollow chambers, and the mephitic wash of poisoned waters that surround it, inspires the horror of disgust.

The morning has not lost its freshness. Antelao and Tofana, guarding the vale above Cortina, show faint streaks of snow upon their amethyst. Little clouds hang in the still autumn sky. There are men dredging for shrimps and crabs through shoals uncovered by the ebb. Nothing can be lovelier, more resting to eyes tired with pictures than this tranquil, sunny expanse of the lagoon. As we round the point of the Bersaglio, new landscapes of island and Alp and low-lying mainland move into sight at every slow stroke of the oar. A luggage-train comes lumbering along the railway bridge, puffing white smoke into the placid blue. Then we strike down Cannaregio, and I muse upon processions of kings and generals and noble strangers, entering Venice by

this water-path from Mestre, before the Austrians built their causeway for the trains. Some of the rare scraps of fresco upon house fronts, still to be seen in Venice, are left in Cannaregio. They are chiaroscuro allegories in a bold bravura manner of the sixteenth century. From these and from a few rosy fragments on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, the Fabbriche Nuove, and precious fading figures in a certain courtyard near San Stefano, we form some notion how Venice looked when all her palaces were painted. Pictures by Gentile Bellini, Mansueti, and Carpaccio help the fancy in this work of restoration. And here and there, in back canals, we come across coloured sections of old buildings, capped by true Venetian chimneys, which for a moment seem to realise our dream.

A morning with Tintoretto might well be followed by a morning with Carpaccio or Bellini. But space is wanting in these pages. Nor would it suit the manner of this medley to hunt the Lombardi through palaces and churches, pointing out their singularities of violet and yellow panellings in marble, the dignity of their wide-opened arches, or the delicacy of their shallow chiselled traceries in cream-white Istrian stone. It is enough to indicate the goal of many a pleasant pilgrimage : warrior angels of Vivarini and Basaiti hidden in a dark chapel of the Frari; Fra Francesco's fantastic orchard of fruits and flowers in distant S. Francesco della Vigna ; the golden Gian Bellini in S. Zaccaria ; Palma's majestic S. Barbara in S. Maria Formosa; San Giobbe's wealth of sculptured frieze and floral scroll; the Ponte di Paradiso, with its Gothic arch; the painted plates in the Museo Civico; and palace after palace, loved for some quaint piece of tracery, some moulding full of mediæval symbolism, some fierce impossible Renaissance freak of fancy.

Rather than prolong this list, I will tell a story which drew

me one day past the Public Gardens to the metropolitan Church of Venice, San Pietro di Castello. The novella is related by Bandello. It has, as will be noticed, points of similarity to that of 'Romeo and Juliet.'

V.—A Venetian Novella

At the time when Carpaccio and Gentile Bellini were painting those handsome youths in tight jackets, parti-coloured hose, and little round caps placed awry upon their shocks of well-combed hair, there lived in Venice two noblemen, Messer Pietro and Messer Paolo, whose palaces fronted each other on the Grand Canal. Messer Paolo was a widower, with one married daughter, and an only son of twenty years or thereabouts, named Gerardo. Messer Pietro's wife was still living; and this couple had but one child, a daughter, called Elena, of exceeding beauty, aged fourteen. Gerardo, as is the wont of gallants, was paying his addresses to a certain lady; and nearly every day he had to cross the Grand Canal in his gondola, and to pass beneath the house of Elena on his way to visit his Dulcinea; for this lady lived some distance up a little canal on which the western side of Messer Pietro's palace looked.

Now it so happened that at the very time when the story opens, Messer Pietro's wife fell ill and died, and Elena was left alone at home with her father and her old nurse. Across the little canal of which I spoke there dwelt another nobleman, with four daughters, between the years of seventeen and twenty-one. Messer Pietro, desiring to provide amusement for poor little Elena, besought this gentleman that his daughters might come on feast-days to play with her. For you must know that, except on festivals of the Church, the custom of Venice required that gentlewomen should remain

closely shut within the private apartments of their dwellings. His request was readily granted; and on the next feast-day the five girls began to play at ball together for forfeits in the great saloon, which opened with its row of Gothic arches and balustraded balcony upon the Grand Canal. The four sisters, meanwhile, had other thoughts than for the game. One or other of them, and sometimes three together, would let the ball drop, and run to the balcony to gaze upon their gallants, passing up and down in gondolas below; and then they would drop flowers or ribands for tokens. Which negligence of theirs annoyed Elena much; for she thought only of the game. Wherefore she scolded them in childish wise, and one of them made answer, 'Elena, if you only knew how pleasant it is to play as we are playing on this balcony, you would not care so much for ball and forfeits!'

On one of those feast-days the four sisters were prevented from keeping their little friend company. Elena, with nothing to do, and feeling melancholy, leaned upon the window-sill which overlooked the narrow canal. And it chanced that just then Gerardo, on his way to Dulcinea, went by; and Elena looked down at him, as she had seen those sisters look at passers-by. Gerardo caught her eye, and glances passed between them, and Gerardo's gondolier, bending from the poop, said to his master, 'O master! methinks that gentle maiden is better worth your wooing than Dulcinea.' Gerardo pretended to pay no heed to these words; but after rowing a little way, he bade the man turn, and they went slowly back beneath the window. This time Elena, thinking to play the game which her four friends had played, took from her hair a clove carnation and let it fall close to Gerardo on the cushion of the gondola. He raised the flower and put it to his lips, acknowledging the courtesy with a grave bow. But the perfume of the clove and the beauty of Elena in that moment

took possession of his heart together, and straightway he forgot Dulcinea.

As yet he knew not who Elena was. Nor is this wonderful; for the daughters of Venetian nobles were but rarely seen or spoken of. But the thought of her haunted him awake and sleeping; and every feast-day, when there was the chance of seeing her, he rowed his gondola beneath her windows. And there she appeared to him in company with her four friends; the five girls clustering together like sister roses beneath the pointed windows of the Gothic balcony. Elena, on her side, had no thought of love; for of love she had heard no one speak. But she took pleasure in the game those friends had taught her, of leaning from the balcony to watch Gerardo. He meanwhile grew love-sick and impatient, wondering how he might declare his passion. Until one day it happened that, walking through a lane or *calle* which skirted Messer Pietro's palace, he caught sight of Elena's nurse, who was knocking at the door, returning from some shopping she had made. This nurse had been his own nurse in childhood; therefore he remembered her, and cried aloud, 'Nurse, Nurse!' But the old woman did not hear him, and passed into the house and shut the door behind her. Whereupon Gerardo, greatly moved, still called to her, and when he reached the door, began to knock upon it violently. And whether it was the agitation of finding himself at last so near the wish of his heart, or whether the pains of waiting for his love had weakened him, I know not; but, while he knocked, his senses left him, and he fell fainting in the doorway. Then the nurse recognised the youth to whom she had given suck, and brought him into the courtyard by the help of handmaidens, and Elena came down and gazed upon him. The house was now full of bustle, and Messer Pietro heard the noise, and seeing the son of his neighbour in so piteous a plight, he caused Gerardo

to be laid upon a bed. But for all they could do with him, he recovered not from his swoon. And after a while force was that they should place him in a gondola and ferry him across to his father's house. The nurse went with him, and informed Messer Paolo of what had happened. Doctors were sent for, and the whole family gathered round Gerardo's bed. After a while he revived a little; and thinking himself still upon the doorstep of Pietro's palace, called again, 'Nurse, Nurse!' She was near at hand, and would have spoken to him. But while he summoned his senses to his aid, he became gradually aware of his own kinsfolk and dissembled the secret of his grief. They beholding him in better cheer, departed on their several ways, and the nurse still sat alone beside him. Then he explained to her what he had at heart, and how he was in love with a maiden whom he had seen on feast-days in the house of Messer Pietro. But still he knew not Elena's name; and she, thinking it impossible that such a child had inspired this passion, began to marvel which of the four sisters it was Gerardo loved. Then they appointed the next Sunday, when all the five girls should be together, for Gerardo by some sign, as he passed beneath the window, to make known to the old nurse his lady.

Elena, meanwhile, who had watched Gerardo lying still and pale in swoon beneath her on the pavement of the palace, felt the stirring of a new unknown emotion in her soul. When Sunday came, she devised excuses for keeping her four friends away, bethinking her that she might see him once again alone, and not betray the agitation which she dreaded. This ill suited the schemes of the nurse, who nevertheless was forced to be content. But after dinner, seeing how restless was the girl, and how she came and went, and ran a thousand times to the balcony, the nurse began to wonder whether Elena herself were not in love with some one. So she feigned to

sleep, but placed herself within sight of the window. And soon Gerardo came by in his gondola; and Elena, who was prepared, threw to him her nosegay. The watchful nurse had risen, and peeping behind the girl's shoulder, saw at a glance how matters stood. Thereupon she began to scold her charge, and say, 'Is this a fair and comely thing, to stand all day at balconies and throw flowers at passers-by? Woe to you if your father should come to know of this! He would make you wish yourself among the dead!' Elena, sore troubled at her nurse's rebuke, turned and threw her arms about her neck, and called her 'Nanna!' as the wont is of Venetian children. Then she told the old woman how she had learned that game from the four sisters, and how she thought it was not different, but far more pleasant, than the game of forfeits; whereupon her nurse spoke gravely, explaining what love is, and how that love should lead to marriage, and bidding her search her own heart if haply she could choose Gerardo for her husband. There was no reason, as she knew, why Messer Paolo's son should not mate with Messer Pietro's daughter. But being a romantic creature, as many women are, she resolved to bring the match about in secret.

Elena took little time to reflect, but told her nurse that she was willing, if Gerardo willed it too, to have him for her husband. Then went the nurse and made the young man know how matters stood, and arranged with him a day, when Messer Pietro should be in the Council of the Pregadi, and the servants of the palace otherwise employed, for him to come and meet his Elena. A glad man was Gerardo, nor did he wait to think how better it would be to ask the hand of Elena in marriage from her father. But when the day arrived, he sought the nurse, and she took him to a chamber in the palace, where there stood an image of the Blessed Virgin. Elena was there, pale and timid; and when the lovers clasped

hands, neither found many words to say. But the nurse bade them take heart, and leading them before Our Lady, joined their hands, and made Gerardo place his ring on his bride's finger. After this fashion were Gerardo and Elena wedded. And for some while, by the assistance of the nurse, they dwelt together in much love and solace, meeting often as occasion offered.

Messer Paolo, who knew nothing of these things, took thought meanwhile for his son's career. It was the season when the Signiory of Venice sends a fleet of galleys to Beirut with merchandise; and the noblemen may bid for the hiring of a ship, and charge it with wares, and send whomsoever they list as factor in their interest. One of these galleys, then, Messer Paolo engaged, and told his son that he had appointed him to journey with it and increase their wealth. 'On thy return, my son,' he said, 'we will bethink us of a wife for thee.' Gerardo, when he heard these words, was sore troubled, and first he told his father roundly that he would not go, and flew off in the twilight to pour out his perplexities to Elena. But she, who was prudent and of gentle soul, besought him to obey his father in this thing, to the end, moreover, that, having done his will and increased his wealth, he might afterwards unfold the story of their secret marriage. To these good counsels, though loth, Gerardo consented. His father was overjoyed at his son's repentance. The galley was straightway laden with merchandise, and Gerardo set forth on his voyage.

The trip to Beirut and back lasted usually six months or at the most seven. Now when Gerardo had been some six months away, Messer Pietro, noticing how fair his daughter was, and how she had grown into womanhood, looked about him for a husband for her. When he had found a youth suitable in birth and wealth and years, he called for Elena,

and told her that the day had been appointed for her marriage. She, alas! knew not what to answer. She feared to tell her father that she was already married, for she knew not whether this would please Gerardo. For the same reason she dreaded to throw herself upon the kindness of Messer Paolo. Nor was her nurse of any help in counsel; for the old woman repented her of what she had done, and had good cause to believe that, even if the marriage with Gerardo were accepted by the two fathers, they would punish her for her own part in the affair. Therefore she bade Elena wait on fortune, and hinted to her that, if the worst came to the worst, no one need know she had been wedded with the ring to Gerardo. Such weddings, you must know, were binding; but till they had been blessed by the Church, they had not taken the force of a religious sacrament. And this is still the case in Italy among the common folk, who will say of a man, 'Si, è ammogliato; ma il matrimonio non è stato benedetto.' 'Yes, he has taken a wife, but the marriage has not yet been blessed.'

So the days flew by in doubt and sore distress for Elena. Then on the night before her wedding, she felt that she could bear this life no longer. But having no poison, and being afraid to pierce her bosom with a knife, she lay down on her bed alone, and tried to die by holding in her breath. A mortal swoon came over her; her senses fled; the life in her remained suspended. And when her nurse came next morning to call her, she found poor Elena cold as a corpse. Messer Pietro and all the household rushed, at the nurse's cries, into the room, and they all saw Elena stretched dead upon her bed undressed. Physicians were called, who made theories to explain the cause of death. But all believed that she was really dead, beyond all help of art or medicine. Nothing remained but to carry her to church for burial instead of marriage. Therefore, that very evening, a funeral proces-

sion was formed, which moved by torchlight up the Grand Canal, along the Riva, past the blank walls of the Arsenal, to the Campo before San Pietro in Castello. Elena lay beneath the black felze in one gondola, with a priest beside her praying, and other boats followed bearing mourners. Then they laid her in a marble chest outside the church, and all departed, still with torches burning, to their homes.

Now it so fell out that upon that very evening Gerardo's galley had returned from Syria, and was anchoring within the port of Lido, which looks across to the island of Castello. It was the gentle custom of Venice at that time that, when a ship arrived from sea, the friends of those on board at once came out to welcome them, and take and give the news. Therefore many noble youths and other citizens were on the deck of Gerardo's galley, making merry with him over the safe conduct of his voyage. Of one of these he asked, 'Whose is yonder funeral procession returning from San Pietro?' The young man made answer, 'Alas, for poor Elena, Messer Pietro's daughter! She should have been married this day. But death took her, and to-night they buried her in the marble monument outside the church.' A woeful man was Gerardo, hearing suddenly this news, and knowing what his dear wife must have suffered ere she died. Yet he restrained himself, daring not to disclose his anguish, and waited till his friends had left the galley. Then he called to him the captain of the oarsmen, who was his friend, and unfolded to him all the story of his love and sorrow, and said that he must go that night and see his wife once more, if even he should have to break her tomb. The captain tried to dissuade him, but in vain. Seeing him so obstinate, he resolved not to desert Gerardo. The two men took one of the galley's boats, and rowed together toward San Pietro. It was past midnight when they reached the Campo and broke the marble sepulchre

asunder. Pushing back its lid, Gerardo descended into the grave and abandoned himself upon the body of his Elena. One who had seen them at that moment could not well have said which of the two was dead and which was living—Elena or her husband. Meantime the captain of the oarsmen, fearing lest the watch (set by the Masters of the Night to keep the peace of Venice) might arrive, was calling on Gerardo to come back. Gerardo heeded him no whit. But at the last, compelled by his entreaties, and as it were astonied, he arose, bearing his wife's corpse in his arms, and carried her clasped against his bosom to the boat, and laid her therein, and sat down by her side and kissed her frequently, and suffered not his friend's remonstrances. Force was for the captain, having brought himself into this scrape, that he should now seek refuge by the nearest way from justice. Therefore he hoved gently from the bank, and plied his oar, and brought the gondola apace into the open waters. Gerardo still clasped Elena, dying husband by dead wife. But the sea-breeze freshened towards daybreak; and the captain, looking down upon that pair, and bringing to their faces the light of his boat's lantern, judged their case not desperate at all. On Elena's cheek there was a flush of life less deadly even than the pallor of Gerardo's forehead. Thereupon the good man called aloud, and Gerardo started from his grief; and both together they chafed the hands and feet of Elena; and, the sea-breeze aiding with its saltness, they awoke in her the spark of life.

Dimly burned the spark. But Gerardo, being aware of it, became a man again. Then, having taken counsel with the captain, both resolved to bear her to that brave man's mother's house. A bed was soon made ready, and food was brought; and after due time, she lifted up her face and knew Gerardo. The peril of the grave was past, but thought had now to be

taken for the future. Therefore Gerardo, leaving his wife to the captain's mother, rowed back to the galley and prepared to meet his father. With good store of merchandise and with great gains from his traffic, he arrived in that old palace on the Grand Canal. Then having opened to Messer Paolo the matters of his journey, and shown him how he had fared, and set before him tables of disbursements and receipts, he seized the moment of his father's gladness. 'Father,' he said, and as he spoke he knelt upon his knees, 'Father, I bring you not good store of merchandise and bags of gold alone; I bring you also a wedded wife, whom I have saved this night from death.' And when the old man's surprise was quieted, he told him the whole story. Now Messer Paolo, desiring no better than that his son should wed the heiress of his neighbour, and knowing well that Messer Pietro would make great joy receiving back his daughter from the grave, bade Gerardo in haste take rich apparel and clothe Elena therewith, and fetch her home. These things were swiftly done; and after eventfall Messer Pietro was bidden to grave business in his neighbour's palace. With heavy heart he came, from a house of mourning to a house of gladness. But there, at the banquet-table's head he saw his dead child Elena alive, and at her side a husband. And when the whole truth had been declared, he not only kissed and embraced the pair who knelt before him, but of his goodness forgave the nurse, who in her turn came trembling to his feet. Then fell there joy and bliss in overmeasure that night upon both palaces of the Canal Grande. And with the morrow the Church blessed the spousals which long since had been on both sides vowed and consummated.

VI.—On the Lagoons

The mornings are spent in study, sometimes among pictures, sometimes in the Marcian Library, or again in those vast convent chambers of the Frari, where the archives of Venice load innumerable shelves. The afternoons invite us to a further flight upon the water. Both sandolo and gondola await our choice, and we may sail or row, according as the wind and inclination tempt us.

Yonder lies San Lazzaro, with the neat red buildings of the Armenian convent. The last oleander blossoms shine rosy pink above its walls against the pure blue sky as we glide into the little harbour. Boats piled with coal-black grapes block the landing-place, for the Padri are gathering their vintage from the Lido, and their presses run with new wine. Eustace and I have not come to revive memories of Byron—that curious patron saint of the Armenian colony—or to inspect the printing-press, which issues books of little value for our studies. It is enough to pace the terrace, and linger half an hour beneath the low broad arches of the alleys pleached with vines, through which the domes and towers of Venice rise more beautiful by distance.

Malamocco lies considerably farther, and needs a full hour of stout rowing to reach it. Alighting there, we cross the narrow strip of land, and find ourselves upon the huge sea-wall—block piled on block—of Istrian stone in tiers and ranks, with cunning breathing-places for the waves to wreak their fury on and foam their force away in fretful waste. The very existence of Venice may be said to depend sometimes on these *murazzi*, which were finished at an immense cost by the Republic in the days of its decadence. The enormous monoliths which compose them had to be brought across the

Adriatic in sailing vessels. Of all the Lidi, that of Malamocco is the weakest; and here, if anywhere, the sea might effect an entrance into the lagoon. Our gondoliers told us of some places where the *murazzi* were broken in a gale, or *sciroccale*, not very long ago. Lying awake in Venice, when the wind blows hard, one hears the sea thundering upon its sandy barrier, and blesses God for the *murazzi*. On such a night it happened once to me to dream a dream of Venice overwhelmed by water. I saw the billows roll across the smooth lagoon like a gigantic Eager. The Ducal Palace crumbled, and San Marco's domes went down. The Campanile rocked and shivered like a reed. And all along the Grand Canal the palaces swayed helpless, tottering to their fall, while boats piled high with men and women strove to stem the tide, and save themselves from those impending ruins. It was a mad dream, born of the sea's roar and Tintoretto's painting. But this afternoon no such visions are suggested. The sea sleeps, and in the moist autumn air we break tall branches of the seeded yellowing samphire from hollows of the rocks, and bear them homeward in a wayward bouquet mixed with cobs of Indian-corn.

Fusina is another point for these excursions. It lies at the mouth of the Canal di Brenta, where the mainland ends in marsh and meadows, intersected by broad renes. In spring the ditches bloom with fleurs-de-lys; in autumn they take sober colouring from lilac daisies and the delicate sea-lavender. Scores of tiny plants are turning scarlet on the brown moist earth; and when the sun goes down behind the Euganean hills, his crimson canopy of cloud, reflected on these shallows, muddy shoals, and wilderness of matted weeds, converts the common earth into a fairyland of fabulous dyes. Purple, violet, and rose are spread around us. In front stretches the lagoon, tinted with a pale light from the east, and beyond this

pallid mirror shines Venice—a long low broken line, touched with the softest roseate flush. Ere we reach the Giudecca on our homeward way, sunset has faded. The western skies have clad themselves in green, barred with dark fire-rimmed clouds. The Euganean hills stand like stupendous pyramids, Egyptian, solemn, against a lemon space on the horizon. The far reaches of the lagoons, the Alps, and islands assume those tones of glowing lilac which are the supreme beauty of Venetian evening. Then, at last, we see the first lamps glitter on the Zattere. The quiet of the night has come.

Words cannot be formed to express the endless varieties of Venetian sunset. The most magnificent follow after wet stormy days, when the west breaks suddenly into a labyrinth of fire, when chasms of clear turquoise heavens emerge, and horns of flame are flashed to the zenith, and unexpected splendours scale the fretted clouds, step over step, stealing along the purple caverns till the whole dome throbs. Or, again, after a fair day, a change of weather approaches, and high, infinitely high, the skies are woven over with a web of half-transparent cirrus-clouds. These in the afterglow blush crimson, and through their rifts the depth of heaven is of a hard and gemlike blue, and all the water turns to rose beneath them. I remember one such evening on the way back from Torcello. We were well out at sea between Mazzorbo and Murano. The ruddy arches overhead were reflected without interruption in the waveless ruddy lake below. Our black boat was the only dark spot in this sphere of splendour. We seemed to hang suspended ; and such as this, I fancied, must be the feeling of an insect caught in the heart of a fiery-petalled rose. Yet not these melodramatic sunsets alone are beautiful. Even more exquisite, perhaps, are the lagoons, painted in monochrome of greys, with just one touch of pink upon a western cloud, scattered in ripples

here and there on the waves below, reminding us that day has passed and evening come. And beautiful again are the calm settings of fair weather, when sea and sky alike are cheerful, and the topmost blades of the lagoon grass, peeping from the shallows, glance like emeralds upon the surface. There is no deep stirring of the spirit in a symphony of light and colour; but purity, peace, and freshness make their way into our hearts.

VII.—At the Lido

Of all these afternoon excursions, that to the Lido is most frequent. It has two points for approach. The more distant is the little station of San Nicoletto, at the mouth of the Porto. With an ebb-tide, the water of the lagoon runs past the mulberry gardens of this hamlet like a river. There is here a grove of acacia-trees, shadowy and dreamy, above deep grass, which even an Italian summer does not wither. The Riva is fairly broad, forming a promenade, where one may conjure up the personages of a century ago. For San Nicoletto used to be a fashionable resort before the other points of Lido had been occupied by pleasure-seekers. An artist even now will select its old-world quiet, leafy shade, and prospect through the islands of Vignole and Sant' Erasmo to snow-touched peaks of Antelao and Tofana, rather than the glare and bustle and extended view of Venice which its rival Sant' Elisabetta offers.

But when we want a plunge into the Adriatic, or a stroll along smooth sands, or a breath of genuine sea-breeze, or a handful of horned poppies from the dunes, or a lazy half-hour's contemplation of a limitless horizon flecked with russet sails, then we seek Sant' Elisabetta. Our boat is left at the landing-place. We saunter across the island and back again.

Antonio and Francesco wait and order wine, which we drink with them in the shade of the little *osteria's* wall.

A certain afternoon in May I well remember, for this visit to the Lido was marked by one of those apparitions which are as rare as they are welcome to the artist's soul. I have always held that in our modern life the only real equivalent for the antique mythopœic sense—that sense which enabled the Hellenic race to figure for themselves the powers of earth and air, streams and forests, and the presiding genii of places, under the forms of living human beings, is supplied by the appearance at some felicitous moment of a man or woman who impersonates for our imagination the essence of the beauty that environs us. It seems, at such a fortunate moment, as though we had been waiting for this revelation, although perchance the want of it had not been previously felt. Our sensations and perceptions test themselves at the touchstone of this living individuality. The keynote of the whole music dimly sounding in our ears is struck. A melody emerges, clear in form and excellent in rhythm. The landscapes we have painted on our brain, no longer lack their central figure. The life proper to the complex conditions we have studied is discovered, and every detail, judged by this standard of vitality, falls into its right relations.

I had been musing long that day and earnestly upon the mystery of the lagoons, their opaline transparencies of air and water, their fretful risings and sudden subsidence into calm, the treacherousness of their shoals, the sparkle and the splendour of their sunlight. I had asked myself how would a Greek sculptor have personified the elemental deity of these salt-water lakes, so different in quality from the Ægean or Ionian sea? What would he find distinctive of their spirit? The Tritons of these shallows must be of other form and lineage than the fierce-eyed youth who blows his conch upon

the curled crest of a wave, crying aloud to his comrades, as he bears the nymph away to caverns where the billows plunge in tideless instability.

We had picked up shells and looked for sea-horses on the Adriatic shore. Then we returned to give our boatmen wine beneath the vine-clad *pergola*. Four other men were there, drinking, and eating from a dish of fried fish set upon the coarse white linen cloth. Two of them soon rose and went away. Of the two who stayed, one was a large, middle-aged man; the other was still young. He was tall and sinewy, but slender, for these Venetians are rarely massive in their strength. Each limb is equally developed by the exercise of rowing upright, bending all the muscles to their stroke. Their bodies are elastically supple, with free sway from the hips and a mercurial poise upon the ankle. Stefano showed these qualities almost in exaggeration. The type in him was refined to its artistic perfection. Moreover, he was rarely in repose, but moved with a singular brusque grace. A black broad-brimmed hat was thrown back upon his matted *zazzera* of dark hair tipped with dusky brown. This shock of hair, cut in flakes, and falling wilfully, reminded me of the lagoon grass when it darkens in autumn upon uncovered shoals, and sunset gilds its sombre edges. Fiery grey eyes beneath it gazed intensely, with compulsive effluence of electricity. It was the wild glance of a Triton. Short blonde moustache, dazzling teeth, skin bronzed, but showing white and healthful through open front and sleeves of lilac shirt. The dashing sparkle of this animate splendour, who looked to me as though the sea-waves and the sun had made him in some hour of secret and unquiet rapture, was somehow emphasised by a curious dint dividing his square chin—a cleft that harmonised with smile on lip and steady flame in eyes. I hardly know what effect it would have upon a reader to compare eyes to

opals. Yet Stefano's eyes, as they met mine, had the vitreous intensity of opals, as though the colour of Venetian waters were vitalised in them. This noticeable being had a rough, hoarse voice, which, to develop the parallel with a sea-god, might have screamed in storm or whispered raucous messages from crests of tossing billows.

I felt, as I looked, that here, for me at least, the mytho-poem of the lagoons was humanised; the spirit of the salt-water lakes had appeared to me; the final touch of life emergent from nature had been given. I was satisfied; for I had seen a poem.

Then we rose, and wandered through the Jews' cemetery. It is a quiet place, where the flat grave-stones, inscribed in Hebrew and Italian, lie deep in Lido sand, waved over with wild grass and poppies. I would fain believe that no neglect, but rather the fashion of this folk, had left the monuments of generations to be thus resumed by nature. Yet, knowing nothing of the history of this burial-ground, I dare not affirm so much. There is one outlying piece of the cemetery which seems to contradict my charitable interpretation. It is not far from San Nicoletto. No enclosure marks it from the unconsecrated dunes. Acacia-trees sprout amid the monuments, and break the tablets with their thorny shoots upthrusting from the soil. Where patriarchs and rabbis sleep for centuries, the fishers of the sea now wander, and defile these habitations of the dead:

> Corruption most abhorred
> Mingling itself with their renownèd ashes.

Some of the grave-stones have been used to fence the towing-path; and one I saw, well carved with letters legible of Hebrew on fair Istrian marble, which roofed an open drain leading from the stable of a Christian dog.

VIII.—A Venetian Restaurant

At the end of a long glorious day, unhappy is that mortal whom the Hermes of a cosmopolitan hotel, white-chokered and white-waistcoated, marshals to the Hades of the *table-d'hôte*. The world has often been compared to an inn; but on my way down to this common meal I have, not unfrequently, felt fain to reverse the simile. From their separate stations, at the appointed hour, the guests like ghosts flit to a gloomy gas-lit chamber. They are of various speech and race, preoccupied with divers interests and cares. Necessity and the waiter drive them all to a sepulchral syssition, whereof the cook too frequently deserves that old Greek comic epithet—ᾅδου μάγειρος—cook of the Inferno. And just as we are told that in Charon's boat we shall not be allowed to pick our society, so here we must accept what fellowship the fates provide. An English spinster retailing paradoxes culled to-day from Ruskin's handbooks; an American citizen describing his jaunt in a gondóla from the railway station; a German shopkeeper descanting in one breath on Baur's Bock and the beauties of the Marcusplatz; an intelligent æsthete bent on working into clearness his own views of Carpaccio's genius: all these in turn, or all together, must be suffered gladly through well-nigh two long hours. Uncomforted in soul we rise from the expensive banquet; and how often rise from it unfed!

Far other be the doom of my own friends—of pious bards and genial companions, lovers of natural and lovely things! Nor for these do I desire a seat at Florian's marble tables, or a perch in Quadri's window, though the former supply dainty food, and the latter command a bird's-eye view of the Piazza. Rather would I lead them to a certain humble tavern

on the Zattere. It is a quaint, low-built, unpretending little place, near a bridge, with a garden hard by which sends a cataract of honeysuckles sunward over a too-jealous wall. In front lies a Mediterranean steamer, which all day long has been discharging cargo. Gazing westward up Giudecca, masts and funnels bar the sunset and the Paduan hills; and from a little front room of the *trattoria* the view is so marine that one keeps fancying oneself in some ship's cabin. Sea-captains sit and smoke beside their glass of grog in the pavilion and the *caffé*. But we do not seek their company at dinner-time. Our way lies under yonder arch, and up the narrow alley into a paved court. Here are oleanders in pots, and plants of Japanese spindle-wood in tubs; and from the walls beneath the window hang cages of all sorts of birds—a talking parrot, a whistling blackbird, goldfinches, canaries, linnets. Athos, the fat dog, who goes to market daily in a *barchetta* with his master, snuffs around. 'Where are Porthos and Aramis, my friend?' Athos does not take the joke; he only wags his stump of tail and pokes his nose into my hand. What a Tartufe's nose it is! Its bridge displays the full parade of leather-bound brass-nailed muzzle. But beneath, this muzzle is a patent sham. The frame does not even pretend to close on Athos' jaw, and the wise dog wears it like a decoration. A little farther we meet that ancient grey cat, who has no discoverable name, but is famous for the sprightliness and grace with which she bears her eighteen years. Not far from the cat one is sure to find Carlo—the bird-like, bright-faced, close-cropped Venetian urchin, whose duty it is to trot backwards and forwards between the cellar and the dining-tables. At the end of the court we walk into the kitchen, where the black-capped little *padrone* and the gigantic white-capped *chef* are in close consultation. Here we have the privilege of inspecting the larder—fish of various sorts, meat, vegetables,

several kinds of birds, pigeons, tordi, beccafichi, geese, wild ducks, chickens, woodcock, &c., according to the season. We select our dinner, and retire to eat it either in the court among the birds beneath the vines, or in the low dark room which occupies one side of it. Artists of many nationalities and divers ages frequent this house; and the talk arising from the several little tables, turns upon points of interest and beauty in the life and landscape of Venice. There can be no difference of opinion about the excellence of the *cuisine*, or about the reasonable charges of this *trattoria*. A soup of lentils, followed by boiled turbot or fried soles, beefsteak or mutton cutlets, tordi or beccafichi, with a salad, the whole enlivened with good red wine or Florio's Sicilian Marsala from the cask, costs about four francs. Gas is unknown in the establishment. There is no noise, no bustle, no brutality of waiters, no *ahurissement* of tourists. And when dinner is done, we can sit awhile over our cigarette and coffee, talking until the night invites us to a stroll along the Zattere or a *giro* in the gondola.

IX.—Night in Venice

Night in Venice! Night is nowhere else so wonderful, unless it be in winter among the high Alps. But the nights of Venice and the nights of the mountains are too different in kind to be compared.

There is the ever-recurring miracle of the full moon rising, before day is dead, behind San Giorgio, spreading a path of gold on the lagoon which black boats traverse with the glow-worm lamp upon their prow; ascending the cloudless sky and silvering the domes of the Salute; pouring vitreous sheen upon the red lights of the Piazzetta; flooding the Grand Canal, and lifting the Rialto higher in ethereal whiteness; piercing

but penetrating not the murky labyrinth of *rio* linked with *rio*, through which we wind in light and shadow, to reach once more the level glories and the luminous expanse of heaven beyond the Misericordia.

This is the melodrama of Venetian moonlight; and if a single impression of the night has to be retained from one visit to Venice, those are fortunate who chance upon a full moon of fair weather. Yet I know not whether some quieter and soberer effects are not more thrilling. To-night, for example, the waning moon will rise late through veils of *scirocco*. Over the bridges of San Cristoforo and San Gregorio, through the deserted Calle di Mezzo, my friend and I walk in darkness, pass the marble basements of the Salute, and push our way along its Riva to the point of the Dogana. We are out at sea alone, between the Canalozzo and the Giudecca. A moist wind ruffles the water and cools our forehead. It is so dark that we can only see San Giorgio by the light reflected on it from the Piazzetta. The same light climbs the Campanile of S. Mark, and shows the golden angel in a mystery of gloom. The only noise that reaches us is a confused hum from the Piazza. Sitting and musing there, the blackness of the water whispers in our ears a tale of death. And now we hear a plash of oars, and gliding through the darkness comes a single boat. One man leaps upon the landing-place without a word and disappears. There is another wrapped in a military cloak asleep. I see his face beneath me, pale and quiet. The *barcaruolo* turns the point in silence. From the darkness they came; into the darkness they have gone. It is only an ordinary incident of coastguard service. But the spirit of the night has made a poem of it.

Even tempestuous and rainy weather, though melancholy enough, is never sordid here. There is no noise from carriage traffic in Venice, and the sea-wind preserves the purity and

transparency of the atmosphere. It had been raining all day, but at evening came a partial clearing. I went down to the Molo, where the large reach of the lagoon was all moon-silvered, and San Giorgio Maggiore dark against the bluish sky, and Santa Maria della Salute domed with moon-irradiated pearl, and the wet slabs of the Riva shimmering in moonlight, the whole misty sky, with its clouds and stellar spaces, drenched in moonlight, nothing but moonlight sensible except the tawny flare of gas-lamps and the orange lights of gondolas afloat upon the waters. On such a night the very spirit of Venice is abroad. We feel why she is called Bride of the Sea.

Take yet another night. There had been a representation of Verdi's 'Forza del Destino' at the Teatro Malibran. After midnight we walked homeward through the Merceria, crossed the Piazza, and dived into the narrow *calle* which leads to the *traghetto* of the Salute. It was a warm moist starless night, and there seemed no air to breathe in those narrow alleys. The gondolier was half asleep. Eustace called him as we jumped into his boat, and rang our *soldi* on the gunwale. Then he arose and turned the *ferro* round, and stood across towards the Salute. Silently, insensibly, from the oppression of confinement in the airless streets to the liberty and immensity of the water and the night we passed. It was but two minutes ere we touched the shore and said good-night, and went our way and left the ferryman. But in that brief passage he had opened our souls to everlasting things—the freshness, and the darkness, and the kindness of the brooding, all-enfolding night above the sea.

THE GONDOLIER'S WEDDING

The night before the wedding we had a supper-party in my rooms. We were twelve in all. My friend Eustace brought his gondolier Antonio with fair-haired, dark-eyed wife, and little Attilio, their eldest child. My own gondolier, Francesco, came with his wife and two children. Then there was the handsome, languid Luigi, who, in his best clothes, or out of them, is fit for any drawing-room. Two gondoliers, in dark blue shirts, completed the list of guests, if we exclude the maid Catina, who came and went about the table, laughing and joining in the songs, and sitting down at intervals to take her share of wine. The big room looking across the garden to the Grand Canal had been prepared for supper; and the company were to be received in the smaller, which has a fine open space in front of it to southwards. But as the guests arrived, they seemed to find the kitchen and the cooking that was going on quite irresistible. Catina, it seems, had lost her head with so many cuttlefishes, *orai*, cakes, and fowls, and cutlets to reduce to order. There was, therefore, a great bustle below stairs; and I could hear plainly that all my guests were lending their making, or their marring, hands to the preparation of the supper. That the company should cook their own food on the way to the dining-room, seemed a quite novel arrangement, but one that promised well for their contentment with the banquet. Nobody could be dissatisfied with what was everybody's affair.

When seven o'clock struck, Eustace and I, who had been

entertaining the children in their mothers' absence, heard the sound of steps upon the stairs. The guests arrived, bringing their own *risotto* with them. Welcome was short, if hearty. We sat down in carefully appointed order, and fell into such conversation as the quarter of San Vio and our several interests supplied. From time to time one of the matrons left the table and descended to the kitchen, when a finishing stroke was needed for roast pullet or stewed veal. The excuses they made their host for supposed failure in the dishes, lent a certain grace and comic charm to the commonplace of festivity. The entertainment was theirs as much as mine; and they all seemed to enjoy what took the form by degrees of curiously complicated hospitality. I do not think a well-ordered supper at any *trattoria*, such as at first suggested itself to my imagination, would have given any of us an equal pleasure or an equal sense of freedom. The three children had become the guests of the whole party. Little Attilio, propped upon an air-cushion, which puzzled him exceedingly, ate through his supper and drank his wine with solid satisfaction, opening the large brown eyes beneath those tufts of clustering fair hair which promise much beauty for him in his manhood. Francesco's boy, who is older and begins to know the world, sat with a semi-suppressed grin upon his face, as though the humour of the situation was not wholly hidden from him. Little Teresa, too, was happy, except when her mother, a severe Pomona, with enormous earrings and splendid *fazzoletto* of crimson and orange dyes, pounced down upon her for some supposed infraction of good manners—*creanza*, as they vividly express it here. Only Luigi looked a trifle bored. But Luigi has been a soldier, and has now attained the supercilious superiority of young-manhood, which smokes its cigar of an evening in the piazza and knows the merits of the different cafés.

The great business of the evening began when the eating was over, and the decanters filled with new wine of Mirano circulated freely. The four best singers of the party drew together; and the rest prepared themselves to make suggestions, hum tunes, and join with fitful effect in choruses. Antonio, who is a powerful young fellow, with bronzed cheeks and a perfect tempest of coal-black hair in flakes upon his forehead, has a most extraordinary soprano—sound as a bell, strong as a trumpet, well trained, and true to the least shade in intonation. Piero, whose rugged Neptunian features, sea-wrinkled, tell of a rough water-life, boasts a bass of resonant, almost pathetic quality. Francesco has a *mezza voce*, which might, by a stretch of politeness, be called baritone. Piero's comrade, whose name concerns us not, has another of these nondescript voices. They sat together with their glasses and cigars before them, sketching part-songs in outline, striking the keynote—now higher and now lower—till they saw their subject well in view. Then they burst into full singing, Antonio leading with a metal note that thrilled one's ears, but still was musical. Complicated contrapuntal pieces, such as we should call madrigals, with ever-recurring refrains of 'Venezia, gemma Triatica, sposa del mar,' descending probably from ancient days, followed each other in quick succession. Barcaroles, serenades, love-songs, and invitations to the water were interwoven for relief. One of these romantic pieces had a beautiful burden, 'Dormi, o bella, o fingi di dormir,' of which the melody was fully worthy. But the most successful of all the tunes were two with a sad motive. The one repeated incessantly 'Ohimé! mia madre morì;' the other was a girl's love lament: 'Perchè tradirmi, perchè lasciarmi! prima d'amarmi non eri così!' Even the children joined in these; and Catina, who took the solo part in the second, was inspired to a great dramatic effort. All these were purely popular

songs. The people of Venice, however, are passionate for operas. Therefore we had duets and solos from 'Ernani,' the 'Ballo in Maschera,' and the 'Forza del Destino,' and one comic chorus from 'Boccaccio,' which seemed to make them wild with pleasure. To my mind, the best of these more formal pieces was a duet between Attila and Italia from some opera unknown to me, which Antonio and Piero performed with incomparable spirit. It was noticeable how, descending to the people, sung by them for love at sea, or on excursions to the villages round Mestre, these operatic reminiscences had lost something of their theatrical formality, and assumed instead the serious gravity, the quaint movement, and marked emphasis which belong to popular music in Northern and Central Italy. An antique character was communicated even to the recitative of Verdi by slight, almost indefinable, changes of rhythm and accent. There was no end to the singing. 'Siamo appassionati per il canto,' frequently repeated, was proved true by the profusion and variety of songs produced from inexhaustible memories, lightly tried over, brilliantly performed, rapidly succeeding each other. Nor were gestures wanting—lifted arms, hands stretched to hands, flashing eyes, hair tossed from the forehead—unconscious and appropriate action—which showed how the spirit of the music and words alike possessed the men. One by one the children fell asleep. Little Attilio and Teresa were tucked up beneath my Scotch shawl at two ends of a great sofa; and not even his father's clarion voice, in the character of Italia defying Attila to harm 'le mie superbe città,' could wake the little boy up. The night wore on. It was past one. Eustace and I had promised to be in the church of the Gesuati at six next morning. We therefore gave the guests a gentle hint, which they as gently took. With exquisite, because perfectly unaffected, breeding they sank for a few moments into common conversation,

then wrapped the children up, and took their leave. It was an uncomfortable, warm, wet night of sullen *scirocco*.

The next day, which was Sunday, Francesco called me at five. There was no visible sunrise that cheerless damp October morning. Grey dawn stole somehow imperceptibly between the veil of clouds and leaden waters, as my friend and I, well sheltered by our *felze*, passed into the Giudecca, and took our station before the church of the Gesuati. A few women from the neighbouring streets and courts crossed the bridges in draggled petticoats on their way to first mass. A few men, shouldering their jackets, lounged along the Zattere, opened the great green doors, and entered. Then suddenly Antonio cried out that the bridal party was on its way, not as we had expected, in boats, but on foot. We left our gondola, and fell into the ranks, after shaking hands with Francesco, who is the elder brother of the bride. There was nothing very noticeable in her appearance, except her large dark eyes. Otherwise both face and figure were of a common type; and her bridal dress of sprigged grey silk, large veil and orange blossoms, reduced her to the level of a *bourgeoise*. It was much the same with the bridegroom. His features, indeed, proved him a true Venetian gondolier; for the skin was strained over the cheekbones, and the muscles of the throat beneath the jaws stood out like cords, and the bright blue eyes were deep-set beneath a spare brown forehead. But he had provided a complete suit of black for the occasion, and wore a shirt of worked cambric, which disguised what is really splendid in the physique of these oarsmen, at once slender and sinewy. Both bride and bridegroom looked uncomfortable in their clothes. The light that fell upon them in the church was dull and leaden. The ceremony, which was very hurriedly performed by an unctuous priest, did not appear to impress either of them. Nobody in the bridal party,

crowding together on both sides of the altar, looked as though the service was of the slightest interest and moment. Indeed, this was hardly to be wondered at; for the priest, so far as I could understand his gabble, took the larger portion for read, after muttering the first words of the rubric. A little carven image of an acolyte—a weird boy who seemed to move by springs, whose hair had all the semblance of painted wood, and whose complexion was white and red like a clown's—did not make matters more intelligible by spasmodically clattering responses.

After the ceremony we heard mass and contributed to three distinct offertories. Considering how much account even two *soldi* are to these poor people, I was really angry when I heard the copper shower. Every member of the party had his or her pennies ready, and dropped them into the boxes. Whether it was the effect of the bad morning, or the ugliness of a very ill-designed *barocco* building, or the fault of the fat oily priest, I know not. But the *sposalizio* struck me as tame and cheerless, the mass as irreverent and vulgarly conducted. At the same time there is something too impressive in the mass for any perfunctory performance to divest its symbolism of sublimity. A Protestant Communion Service lends itself more easily to degradation by unworthiness in the minister.

We walked down the church in double file, led by the bride and bridegroom, who had knelt during the ceremony with the best man—*compare*, as he is called—at a narrow *priedieu* before the altar. The *compare* is a person of distinction at these weddings. He has to present the bride with a great pyramid of artificial flowers, which is placed before her at the marriage-feast, a packet of candles, and a box of bonbons. The comfits, when the box is opened, are found to include two magnificent sugar babies lying in their cradles. I was told that a *compare*, who does the thing handsomely, must be

prepared to spend about a hundred francs upon these presents, in addition to the wine and cigars with which he treats his friends. On this occasion the women were agreed that he had done his duty well. He was a fat, wealthy little man, who lived by letting market-boats for hire on the Rialto.

From the church to the bride's house was a walk of some three minutes. On the way we were introduced to the father of the bride—a very magnificent personage, with points of strong resemblance to Vittorio Emmanuele. He wore an enormous broad-brimmed hat and emerald-green earrings, and looked considerably younger than his eldest son, Francesco. Throughout the *nozze* he took the lead in a grand imperious fashion of his own. Wherever he went, he seemed to fill the place, and was fully aware of his own importance. In Florence I think he would have got the nickname of *Tacchin*, or turkey-cock. Here at Venice the sons and daughters call their parent briefly *Vecchio*. I heard him so addressed with a certain amount of awe, expecting an explosion of bubbly-jock displeasure. But he took it, as though it was natural, without disturbance. The other *Vecchio*, father of the bride-groom, struck me as more sympathetic. He was a gentle old man, proud of his many prosperous, laborious sons. They, like the rest of the gentlemen, were gondoliers. Both the *Vecchi*, indeed, continue to ply their trade, day and night, at the *traghetto*.

Traghetti are stations for gondolas at different points of the canals. As their name implies, it is the first duty of the gondoliers upon them to ferry people across. This they do for the fixed fee of five centimes. The *traghetti* are in fact Venetian cab-stands. And, of course, like London cabs, the gondolas may be taken off them for trips. The municipality, however, makes it a condition, under penalty of fine to the *traghetto*, that each station should always be provided with two boats for the service of the ferry. When vacancies occur

on the *traghetti*, a gondolier who owns or hires a boat makes application to the municipality, receives a number, and is inscribed as plying at a certain station. He has now entered a sort of guild, which is presided over by a *Capo-traghetto*, elected by the rest for the protection of their interests, the settlement of disputes, and the management of their common funds. In the old acts of Venice this functionary is styled *Gastaldo di traghetto*. The members have to contribute something yearly to the guild. This payment varies upon different stations, according to the greater or less amount of the tax levied by the municipality on the *traghetto*. The highest subscription I have heard of is twenty-five francs; the lowest, seven. There is one *traghetto*, known by the name of Madonna del Giglio or Zobenigo, which possesses near its *pergola* of vines a nice old brown Venetian picture. Some stranger offered a considerable sum for this. But the guild refused to part with it.

As may be imagined, the *traghetti* vary greatly in the amount and quality of their custom. By far the best are those in the neighbourhood of the hotels upon the Grand Canal. At any one of these a gondolier during the season is sure of picking up some foreigner or other who will pay him handsomely for comparatively light service. A *traghetto* on the Giudecca, on the contrary, depends upon Venetian traffic. The work is more monotonous, and the pay is reduced to its tariffed minimum. So far as I can gather, an industrious gondolier, with a good boat, belonging to a good *traghetto*, may make as much as ten or fifteen francs in a single day. But this cannot be relied on. They therefore prefer a fixed appointment with a private family, for which they receive by tariff five francs a day, or by arrangement for long periods perhaps four francs a day, with certain perquisites and small advantages. It is great luck to get such an engagement for

the winter. The heaviest anxieties which beset a gondolier are then disposed of. Having entered private service, they are not allowed to ply their trade on the *traghetto*, except by stipulation with their masters. Then they may take their place one night out of every six in the rank and file. The gondoliers have two proverbs, which show how desirable it is, while taking a fixed engagement, to keep their hold on the *traghetto*. One is to this effect: *il traghetto è un buon padrone.* The other satirises the meanness of the poverty-stricken Venetian nobility: *pompa di servitù, misera insegna.* When they combine the *traghetto* with private service, the municipality insists on their retaining the number painted on their gondola; and against this their employers frequently object. It is therefore a great point for a gondolier to make such an arrangement with his master as will leave him free to show his number. The reason for this regulation is obvious. Gondoliers are known more by their numbers and their *traghetti* than their names. They tell me that though there are upwards of a thousand registered in Venice, each man of the trade knows the whole confraternity by face and number. Taking all things into consideration, I think four francs a day the whole year round are very good earnings for a gondolier. On this he will marry and rear a family, and put a little money by. A young unmarried man, working at two and a half or three francs a day, is proportionately well-to-do. If he is economical, he ought upon these wages to save enough in two or three years to buy himself a gondola. A boy from fifteen to nineteen is called a *mezz' uomo*, and gets about one franc a day. A new gondola with all its fittings is worth about a thousand francs. It does not last in good condition more than six or seven years. At the end of that time the hull will fetch eighty francs. A new hull can be had for three hundred francs. The old fittings

—brass sea-horses or *cavalli*, steel prow or *ferro*, covered cabin or *felze*, cushions and leather-covered back-board or *stramazetto*, may be transferred to it. When a man wants to start a gondola, he will begin by buying one already half past service—a *gondola da traghetto* or *di mezza età*. This should cost him something over two hundred francs. Little by little, he accumulates the needful fittings; and when his first purchase is worn out, he hopes to set up with a well-appointed equipage. He thus gradually works his way from the rough trade which involves hard work and poor earnings to that more profitable industry which cannot be carried on without a smart boat. The gondola is a source of continual expense for repairs. Its oars have to be replaced. It has to be washed with sponges, blacked, and varnished. Its bottom needs frequent cleaning. Weeds adhere to it in the warm brackish water, growing rapidly through the summer months, and demanding to be scrubbed off once in every four weeks. The gondolier has no place where he can do this for himself. He therefore takes his boat to a wharf, or *squero*, as the place is called. At these *squeri* gondolas are built as well as cleaned. The fee for a thorough setting to rights of the boat is five francs. It must be done upon a fine day. Thus in addition to the cost, the owner loses a good day's work.

These details will serve to give some notion of the sort of people with whom Eustace and I spent our day. The bride's house is in an excellent position on an open canal leading from the Canalozzo to the Giudecca. She had arrived before us, and received her friends in the middle of the room. Each of us in turn kissed her cheek and murmured our congratulations. We found the large living-room of the house arranged with chairs all round the walls, and the company were marshalled in some order of precedence, my friend and I taking place near the bride. On either hand airy bedrooms opened

out, and two large doors, wide open, gave a view from where we sat of a good-sized kitchen. This arrangement of the house was not only comfortable, but pretty; for the bright copper pans and pipkins ranged on shelves along the kitchen walls had a very cheerful effect. The walls were white-washed, but literally covered with all sorts of pictures. A great plaster cast from some antique, an Atys, Adonis, or Paris, looked down from a bracket placed between the windows. There was enough furniture, solid and well kept, in all the rooms. Among the pictures were full-length portraits in oils of two celebrated gondoliers—one in antique costume, the other painted a few years since. The original of the latter soon came and stood before it. He had won regatta prizes; and the flags of four discordant colours were painted round him by the artist, who had evidently cared more to commemorate the triumphs of his sitter and to strike a likeness than to secure the tone of his own picture. This champion turned out a fine fellow—Corradini—with one of the brightest little gondoliers of thirteen for his son.

After the company were seated, lemonade and cakes were handed round amid a hubbub of chattering women. Then followed cups of black coffee and more cakes. Then a glass of Cyprus and more cakes. Then a glass of curaçoa and more cakes. Finally, a glass of noyau and still more cakes. It was only a little after seven in the morning. Yet politeness compelled us to consume these delicacies. I tried to shirk my duty; but this discretion was taken by my hosts for well-bred modesty; and instead of being let off, I had the richest piece of pastry and the largest maccaroon available pressed so kindly on me, that, had they been poisoned, I would not have refused to eat them. The conversation grew more and more animated, the women gathering together in their dresses of bright blue and scarlet, the men lighting

cigars and puffing out a few quiet words. It struck me as a drawback that these picturesque people had put on Sunday-clothes to look as much like shopkeepers as possible. But they did not all of them succeed. Two handsome women, who handed the cups round—one a brunette, the other a blonde—wore skirts of brilliant blue, with a sort of white jacket, and white kerchief folded heavily about their shoulders. The brunette had a great string of coral, the blonde of amber, round her throat. Gold earrings and the long gold chains Venetian women wear, of all patterns and degrees of value, abounded. Nobody appeared without them; but I could not see any of an antique make. The men seemed to be contented with rings—huge, heavy rings of solid gold, worked with a rough flower pattern. One young fellow had three upon his fingers. This circumstance led me to speculate whether a certain portion at least of this display of jewellery around me had not been borrowed for the occasion.

Eustace and I were treated quite like friends. They called us *I Signori*. But this was only, I think, because our English names are quite unmanageable. The women fluttered about us and kept asking whether we really liked it all? whether we should come to the *pranzo*? whether it was true we danced? It seemed to give them unaffected pleasure to be kind to us; and when we rose to go away, the whole company crowded round, shaking hands and saying: 'Si divertirà bene stasera!' Nobody resented our presence; what was better, no one put himself out for us. 'Vogliono veder il nostro costume,' I heard one woman say.

We got home soon after eight, and, as our ancestors would have said, settled our stomachs with a dish of tea. It makes me shudder now to think of the mixed liquids and miscellaneous cakes we had consumed at that unwonted hour.

At half-past three, Eustace and I again prepared ourselves

for action. His gondola was in attendance, covered with the *felze*, to take us to the house of the *sposa*. We found the canal crowded with poor people of the quarter—men, women, and children lining the walls along its side, and clustering like bees upon the bridges. The water itself was almost choked with gondolas. Evidently the folk of San Vio thought our wedding procession would be a most exciting pageant. We entered the house, and were again greeted by the bride and bridegroom, who consigned each of us to the control of a fair tyrant. This is the most fitting way of describing our introduction to our partners of the evening; for we were no sooner presented, than the ladies swooped upon us like their prey, placing their shawls upon our left arms, while they seized and clung to what was left available of us for locomotion. There was considerable giggling and tittering throughout the company when Signora Fenzo, the young and comely wife of a gondolier, thus took possession of Eustace, and Signora dell' Acqua, the widow of another gondolier, appropriated me. The affair had been arranged beforehand, and their friends had probably chaffed them with the difficulty of managing two mad Englishmen. However, they proved equal to the occasion, and the difficulties were entirely on our side. Signora Fenzo was a handsome brunette, quiet in her manners, who meant business. I envied Eustace his subjection to such a reasonable being. Signora dell' Acqua, though a widow, was by no means disconsolate; and I soon perceived that it would require all the address and diplomacy I possessed, to make anything out of her society. She laughed incessantly; darted in the most diverse directions, dragging me along with her; exhibited me in triumph to her cronies; made eyes at me over a fan; repeated my clumsiest remarks, as though they gave her indescribable amusement; and all the while jabbered Venetian at express rate, without the

slightest regard for my incapacity to follow her vagaries. The *Vecchio* marshalled us in order. First went the *sposa* and *comare* with the mothers of bride and bridegroom. Then followed the *sposo* and the bridesmaid. After them I was made to lead my fair tormentor. As we descended the staircase there arose a hubbub of excitement from the crowd on the canals. The gondolas moved turbidly upon the face of the waters. The bridegroom kept muttering to himself, 'How we shall be criticised! They will tell each other who was decently dressed, and who stepped awkwardly into the boats, and what the price of my boots was!' Such exclamations, murmured at intervals, and followed by chest-drawn sighs, expressed a deep preoccupation. With regard to his boots, he need have had no anxiety. They were of the shiniest patent leather, much too tight, and without a speck of dust upon them. But his nervousness infected me with a cruel dread. All those eyes were going to watch how we comported ourselves in jumping from the landing-steps into the boat! If this operation, upon a ceremonious occasion, has terrors even for a gondolier, how formidable it ought to be to me! And here is the Signora dell' Acqua's white cachemire shawl dangling on one arm, and the Signora herself languishingly clinging to the other; and the gondolas are fretting in a fury of excitement, like corks, upon the churned green water! The moment was terrible. The *sposa* and her three companions had been safely stowed away beneath their *felze*. The *sposo* had successfully handed the bridesmaid into the second gondola. I had to perform the same office for my partner. Off she went, like a bird, from the bank. I seized a happy moment, followed, bowed, and found myself to my contentment gracefully ensconced in a corner opposite the widow. Seven more gondolas were packed. The procession moved. We glided down the little channel, broke

away into the Grand Canal, crossed it, and dived into a labyrinth from which we finally emerged before our destination, the Trattoria di San Gallo. The perils of the landing were soon over; and, with the rest of the guests, my mercurial companion and I slowly ascended a long flight of stairs leading to a vast upper chamber. Here we were to dine.

It had been the gallery of some palazzo in old days, was above one hundred feet in length, fairly broad, with a roof of wooden rafters and large windows opening on a courtyard garden. I could see the tops of three cypress-trees cutting the grey sky upon a level with us. A long table occupied the centre of this room. It had been laid for upwards of forty persons, and we filled it. There was plenty of light from great glass lustres blazing with gas. When the ladies had arranged their dresses, and the gentlemen had exchanged a few polite remarks, we all sat down to dinner—I next my inexorable widow, Eustace beside his calm and comely partner. The first impression was one of disappointment. It looked so like a public dinner of middle-class people. There was no local character in costume or customs. Men and women sat politely bored, expectant, trifling with their napkins, yawning, muttering nothings about the weather or their neighbours. The frozen commonplaceness of the scene was made for me still more oppressive by Signora dell' Acqua. She was evidently satirical, and could not be happy unless continually laughing at or with somebody. 'What a stick the woman will think me!' I kept saying to myself. 'How shall I ever invent jokes in this strange land? I cannot even flirt with her in Venetian! And here I have condemned myself—and her too, poor thing—to sit through at least three hours of mortal dulness!' Yet the widow was by no means unattractive. Dressed in black, she had contrived by an artful arrangement of lace and jewellery to give an air of lightness to her

costume. She had a pretty little pale face, a *minois chiffonné*, with slightly turned-up nose, large laughing brown eyes, a dazzling set of teeth, and a tempestuously frizzled mop of powdered hair. When I managed to get a side-look at her quietly, without being giggled at or driven half mad by unintelligible incitements to a jocularity I could not feel, it struck me that, if we once found a common term of communication we should become good friends. But for the moment that *modus vivendi* seemed unattainable. She had not recovered from the first excitement of her capture of me. She was still showing me off and trying to stir me up. The arrival of the soup gave me a momentary relief; and soon the serious business of the afternoon began. I may add that before dinner was over, the Signora dell' Acqua and I were fast friends. I had discovered the way of making jokes, and she had become intelligible. I found her a very nice, though flighty, little woman; and I believe she thought me gifted with the faculty of uttering eccentric epigrams in a grotesque tongue. Some of my remarks were flung about the table, and had the same success as uncouth Lombard carvings have with connoisseurs in *naïvetés* of art. By that time we had come to be *compare* and *comare* to each other—the sequel of some clumsy piece of jocularity.

It was a heavy entertainment, copious in quantity, excellent in quality, plainly but well cooked. I remarked there was no fish. The widow replied that everybody present ate fish to satiety at home. They did not join a marriage feast at the San Gallo, and pay their nine francs, for that! It should be observed that each guest paid for his own entertainment. This appears to be the custom. Therefore attendance is complimentary, and the married couple are not at ruinous charges for the banquet. A curious feature in the whole proceeding had its origin in this custom. I noticed that before

each cover lay an empty plate, and that my partner began with the first course to heap upon it what she had not eaten. She also took large helpings, and kept advising me to do the same. I said: 'No; I only take what I want to eat; if I fill that plate in front of me as you are doing, it will be great waste.' This remark elicited shrieks of laughter from all who heard it; and when the hubbub had subsided, I perceived an apparently official personage bearing down upon Eustace, who was in the same perplexity. It was then circumstantially explained to us that the empty plates were put there in order that we might lay aside what we could not conveniently eat, and take it home with us. At the end of the dinner the widow (whom I must now call my *comare*) had accumulated two whole chickens, half a turkey, and a large assortment of mixed eatables. I performed my duty and won her regard by placing delicacies at her disposition.

Crudely stated, this proceeding moves disgust. But that is only because one has not thought the matter out. In the performance there was nothing coarse or nasty. These good folk had made a contract at so much a head—so many fowls, so many pounds of beef, &c., to be supplied; and what they had fairly bought, they clearly had a right to. No one, so far as I could notice, tried to take more than his proper share; except, indeed, Eustace and myself. In our first eagerness to conform to custom, we both overshot the mark, and grabbed at disproportionate helpings. The waiters politely observed that we were taking what was meant for two; and as the courses followed in interminable sequence, we soon acquired the tact of what was due to us.

Meanwhile the room grew warm. The gentlemen threw off their coats—a pleasant liberty of which I availed myself, and was immediately more at ease. The ladies divested themselves of their shoes (strange to relate!) and sat in comfort

with their stockinged feet upon the *scagliola* pavement. I observed that some cavaliers by special permission were allowed to remove their partners' slippers. This was not my lucky fate. My *comare* had not advanced to that point of intimacy. Healths began to be drunk. The conversation took a lively turn; and women went fluttering round the table, visiting their friends, to sip out of their glass, and ask each other how they were getting on. It was not long before the stiff veneer of *bourgeoisie* which bored me had worn off. The people emerged in their true selves: natural, gentle, sparkling with enjoyment, playful. Playful is, I think, the best word to describe them. They played with infinite grace and innocence, like kittens, from the old men of sixty to the little boys of thirteen. Very little wine was drunk. Each guest had a litre placed before him. Many did not finish theirs; and for very few was it replenished. When at last the dessert arrived, and the bride's comfits had been handed round, they began to sing. It was very pretty to see a party of three or four friends gathering round some popular beauty, and paying her compliments in verse—they grouped behind her chair, she sitting back in it and laughing up to them, and joining in the chorus. The words, 'Brunetta mia simpatica, ti amo sempre più,' sung after this fashion to Eustace's handsome partner, who puffed delicate whiffs from a Russian cigarette, and smiled her thanks, had a peculiar appropriateness. All the ladies, it may be observed in passing, had by this time lit their cigarettes. The men were smoking Toscani, Sellas, or Cavours, and the little boys were dancing round the table breathing smoke from their pert nostrils.

The dinner, in fact, was over. Other relatives of the guests arrived, and then we saw how some of the reserved dishes were to be bestowed. A side-table was spread at the end of the gallery, and these late-comers were regaled with plenty by

their friends. Meanwhile, the big table at which we had dined was taken to pieces and removed. The *scagliola* floor was swept by the waiters. Musicians came streaming in and took their places. The ladies resumed their shoes. Every one prepared to dance.

My friend and I were now at liberty to chat with the men. He knew some of them by sight, and claimed acquaintance with others. There was plenty of talk about different boats, gondolas, and sandolos and topos, remarks upon the past season, and inquiries as to chances of engagements in the future. One young fellow told us how he had been drawn for the army, and should be obliged to give up his trade just when he had begun to make it answer. He had got a new gondola, and this would have to be hung up during the years of his service. The warehousing of a boat in these circumstances costs nearly one hundred francs a year, which is a serious tax upon the pockets of a private in the line. Many questions were put in turn to us, but all of the same tenor. 'Had we really enjoyed the *pranzo*? Now, really, were we amusing ourselves? And did we think the custom of the wedding *un bel costume*?' We could give an unequivocally hearty response to all these interrogations. The men seemed pleased. Their interest in our enjoyment was unaffected. It is noticeable how often the word *divertimento* is heard upon the lips of the Italians. They have a notion that it is the function in life of the *Signori* to amuse themselves.

The ball opened, and now we were much besought by the ladies. I had to deny myself with a whole series of comical excuses. Eustace performed his duty after a stiff English fashion—once with his pretty partner of the *pranzo*, and once again with a fat gondolier. The band played waltzes and polkas, chiefly upon patriotic airs—the Marcia Reale, Garibaldi's Hymn, &c. Men danced with men, women with

women, little boys and girls together. The gallery whirled with a laughing crowd. There was plenty of excitement and enjoyment—not an unseemly or extravagant word or gesture. My *comare* careered about with a light mænadic impetuosity, which made me regret my inability to accept her pressing invitations. She pursued me into every corner of the room, but when at last I dropped excuses and told her that my real reason for not dancing was that it would hurt my health, she waived her claims at once with an *Ah, poverino!*

Some time after midnight we felt that we had had enough of *divertimento*. Francesco helped us to slip out unobserved. With many silent good wishes we left the innocent playful people who had been so kind to us. The stars were shining from a watery sky as we passed into the piazza beneath the Campanile and the pinnacles of S. Mark. The Riva was almost empty, and the little waves fretted the boats moored to the piazzetta, as a warm moist breeze went fluttering by. We smoked a last cigar, crossed our *traghetto*, and were soon sound asleep at the end of a long pleasant day. The ball, we heard next morning, finished about four.

Since that evening I have had plenty of opportunities for seeing my friends the gondoliers, both in their own homes and in my apartment. Several have entertained me at their mid-day meal of fried fish and amber-coloured polenta. These repasts were always cooked with scrupulous cleanliness, and served upon a table covered with coarse linen. The polenta is turned out upon a wooden platter, and cut with a string called *lassa*. You take a large slice of it on the palm of the left hand, and break it with the fingers of the right. Wholesome red wine of the Paduan district and good white bread were never wanting. The rooms in which we met to eat looked out on narrow lanes or over pergolas of yellowing vines. Their whitewashed walls were hung with photographs

of friends and foreigners, many of them souvenirs from English or American employers. The men, in broad black hats and lilac shirts, sat round the table, girt with the red waist-wrapper, or *fascia*, which marks the ancient faction of the Castellani. The other faction, called Nicolotti, are distinguished by a black *assisa*. The quarters of the town are divided unequally and irregularly into these two parties. What was once a formidable rivalry between two sections of the Venetian populace, still survives in challenges to trials of strength and skill upon the water. The women, in their many-coloured kerchiefs, stirred polenta at the smoke-blackened chimney, whose huge pent-house roof projects two feet or more across the hearth. When they had served the table they took their seat on low stools, knitted stockings, or drank out of glasses handed across the shoulder to them by their lords. Some of these women were clearly notable housewives, and I have no reason to suppose that they do not take their full share of the housework. Boys and girls came in and out, and got a portion of the dinner to consume where they thought best. Children went tottering about upon the red-brick floor, the playthings of those hulking fellows, who handled them very gently and spoke kindly in a sort of confidential whisper to their ears. These little ears were mostly pierced for earrings, and the light blue eyes of the urchins peeped maliciously beneath shocks of yellow hair. A dog was often of the party. He ate fish like his masters, and was made to beg for it by sitting up and rowing with his paws. *Voga, Azzò, voga!* The Anzolo who talked thus to his little brown Spitz-dog has the hoarse voice of a Triton and the movement of an animated sea-wave. Azzo performed his trick, swallowed his fish-bones, and the fiery Anzolo looked round approvingly.

On all these occasions I have found these gondoliers the

same sympathetic, industrious, cheery affectionate folk. They live in many respects a hard and precarious life. The winter in particular is a time of anxiety, and sometimes of privation, even to the well-to-do among them. Work then is scarce, and what there is, is rendered disagreeable to them by the cold. Yet they take their chance with facile temper, and are not soured by hardships. The amenities of the Venetian sea and air, the healthiness of the lagoons, the cheerful bustle of the poorer quarters, the brilliancy of this Southern sunlight, and the beauty which is everywhere apparent, must be reckoned as important factors in the formation of their character. And of that character, as I have said, the final note is playfulness. In spite of difficulties, their life has never been stern enough to sadden them. Bare necessities are marvellously cheap, and the pinch of real bad weather—such frost as locked the lagoons in ice two years ago, or such south-western gales as flooded the basement floors of all the houses on the Zattere—is rare and does not last long. On the other hand, their life has never been so lazy as to reduce them to the savagery of the traditional Neapolitan lazzaroni. They have had to work daily for small earnings, but under favourable conditions, and their labour has been lightened by much good-fellowship among themselves, by the amusements of their *feste* and their singing clubs.

Of course it is not easy for a stranger in a very different social position to feel that he has been admitted to their confidence. Italians have an ineradicable habit of making themselves externally agreeable, of bending in all indifferent matters to the whims and wishes of superiors, and of saying what they think *Signori* like. This habit, while it smoothes the surface of existence, raises up a barrier of compliment and partial insincerity, against which the more downright natures of us Northern folk break in vain efforts. Our advances are met

with an imperceptible but impermeable resistance by the very people who are bent on making the world pleasant to us. It is the very reverse of that dour opposition which a Lowland Scot or a North English peasant offers to familiarity; but it is hardly less insurmountable. The treatment, again, which Venetians of the lower class have received through centuries from their own nobility, makes attempts at fraternisation on the part of gentlemen unintelligible to them. The best way, here and elsewhere, of overcoming these obstacles is to have some bond of work or interest in common—of service on the one side rendered, and goodwill on the other honestly displayed. The men of whom I have been speaking will, I am convinced, not shirk their share of duty or make unreasonable claims upon the generosity of their employers.

A CINQUE CENTO BRUTUS

I.—The Sestiere di San Polo

There is a quarter of Venice not much visited by tourists, lying as it does outside their beat, away from the Rialto, at a considerable distance from the Frari and San Rocco, in what might almost pass for a city separated by a hundred miles from the Piazza. This is the quarter of San Polo, one corner of which, somewhere between the back of the Palazzo Foscari and the Campo di San Polo, was the scene of a memorable act of vengeance in the year 1546. Here Lorenzino de' Medici, the murderer of his cousin Alessandro, was at last tracked down and put to death by paid cut-throats. How they succeeded in their purpose, we know in every detail from the narrative dictated by the chief assassin. His story so curiously illustrates the conditions of life in Italy three centuries ago, that I have thought it worthy of abridgment. But, in order to make it intelligible, and to paint the manners of the times more fully, I must first relate the series of events which led to Lorenzino's murder of his cousin Alessandro, and from that to his own subsequent assassination. Lorenzino de' Medici, the Florentine Brutus of the sixteenth century, is the hero of the tragedy. Some of his relatives, however, must first appear upon the scene before he enters with a patriot's knife concealed beneath a court-fool's bauble.

II.—The Murder of Ippolito de' Medici

After the final extinction of the Florentine Republic, the hopes of the Medici, who now aspired to the dukedom of Tuscany, rested on three bastards—Alessandro, the reputed child of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino; Ippolito, the natural son of Giuliano, Duke of Nemours; and Giulio, the offspring of an elder Giuliano, who was at this time Pope, with the title of Clement VII. Clement had seen Rome sacked in 1527 by a horde of freebooters fighting under the Imperial standard, and had used the remnant of these troops, commanded by the Prince of Orange, to crush his native city in the memorable siege of 1529–30. He now determined to rule Florence from the Papal chair by the help of the two bastard cousins I have named. Alessandro was created Duke of Città di Penna, and sent to take the first place in the city. Ippolito was made a cardinal; since the Medici had learned that Rome was the real basis of their power, and it was undoubtedly in Clement's policy to advance this scion of his house to the Papacy. The sole surviving representative of the great Lorenzo de' Medici's legitimate blood was Catherine, daughter of the Duke of Urbino by Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne. She was pledged in marriage to the Duke of Orleans, who was afterwards Henry II. of France. A natural daughter of the Emperor Charles V. was provided for her putative half-brother Alessandro. By means of these alliances the succession of Ippolito to the Papal chair would have been secured, and the strength of the Medici would have been confirmed in Tuscany, but for the disasters which have now to be related.

Between the cousins Alessandro and Ippolito there was no love lost. As boys, they had both played the part of princes in Florence under the guardianship of the Cardinal Passerini

da Cortona. The higher rank had then been given to Ippolito, who bore the title of Magnifico, and seemed thus designated for the lordship of the city. Ippolito, though only half a Medici, was of more authentic lineage than Alessandro; for no proof positive could be adduced that the latter was even a spurious child of the Duke of Urbino. He bore obvious witness to his mother's blood upon his mulatto's face; but this mother was the wife of a groom, and it was certain that in the court of Urbino she had not been chary of her favours. The old magnificence of taste, the patronage of art and letters, and the preference for liberal studies which distinguished Casa Medici, survived in Ippolito; whereas Alessandro manifested only the brutal lusts of a debauched tyrant. It was therefore with great reluctance that, moved by reasons of state and domestic policy, Ippolito saw himself compelled to accept the scarlet hat. Alessandro having been recognised as a son of the Duke of Urbino, had become half-brother to the future Queen of France. To treat him as the head of the family was a necessity thrust, in the extremity of the Medicean fortunes, upon Clement. Ippolito, who more entirely represented the spirit of the house, was driven to assume the position of a cadet, with all the uncertainties of an ecclesiastical career.

In these circumstances Ippolito had not strength of character to sacrifice himself for the consolidation of the Medicean power, which could only have been effected by maintaining a close bond of union between its members. The death of Clement in 1534 obscured his prospects in the Church. He was still too young to intrigue for the tiara. The new Pope, Alessandro Farnese, soon after his election, displayed a vigour which was unexpected from his age, together with a nepotism which his previous character had scarcely warranted. The Cardinal de' Medici felt himself excluded and oppressed. He joined the party of those

numerous Florentine exiles, headed by Filippo Strozzi, and the Cardinals Salviati and Ridolfi, all of whom were connected by marriage with the legitimate Medici, and who unanimously hated and were jealous of the Duke of Città di Penna. On the score of policy it is difficult to condemn this step. Alessandro's hold upon Florence was still precarious, nor had he yet married Margaret of Austria. Perhaps Ippolito was right in thinking he had less to gain from his cousin than from the anti-Medicean faction and the princes of the Church who favoured it. But he did not play his cards well. He quarrelled with the new Pope, Paul III., and by his vacillations led the Florentine exiles to suspect he might betray them.

In the summer of 1535 Ippolito was at Itri, a little town not far from Gaeta and Terracina, within easy reach of Fondi, where dwelt the beautiful Giulia Gonzaga. To this lady the Cardinal paid assiduous court, passing his time with her in the romantic scenery of that world-famous Capuan coast. On the 5th of August his seneschal, Giovann' Andrea, of Borgo San Sepolcro, brought him a bowl of chicken-broth, after drinking which he exclaimed to one of his attendants, 'I have been poisoned, and the man who did it is Giovann' Andrea.' The seneschal was taken and tortured, and confessed that he had mixed a poison with the broth. Four days afterwards the Cardinal died, and a post-mortem examination showed that the omentum had been eaten by some corrosive substance. Giovann' Andrea was sent in chains to Rome; but in spite of his confession, more than once repeated, the court released him. He immediately took refuge with Alessandro de' Medici in Florence, whence he repaired to Borgo San Sepolcro, and was, at the close of a few months, there murdered by the people of the place. From these circumstances it was conjectured, not without good reason, that Alessandro had procured his cousin's death; and a certain

Captain Pignatta, of low birth in Florence, a bravo and a coward, was believed to have brought the poison to Itri from the Duke. The Medicean courtiers at Florence did not disguise their satisfaction; and one of them exclaimed, with reference to the event, 'We know how to brush flies from our noses!'

III.—The Murder of Alessandro de' Medici

Having removed his cousin and rival from the scene, Alessandro de' Medici plunged with even greater effrontery into the cruelties and debaucheries which made him odious in Florence. It seemed as though fortune meant to smile on him; for in this same year (1535) Charles V. decided at Naples in his favour against the Florentine exiles, who were pleading their own cause and that of the city injured by his tyrannies; and in February of the following year he married Margaret of Austria, the Emperor's natural daughter. Francesco Guicciardini, the first statesman and historian of his age, had undertaken his defence, and was ready to support him by advice and countenance in the conduct of his government. Within the lute of this prosperity, however, there was one little rift. For some months past he had closely attached to his person a certain kinsman, Lorenzo de' Medici, who was descended in the fourth generation from Lorenzo, the brother of Cosimo Pater Patriæ. This Lorenzo, or Lorenzino, or Lorenzaccio, as his most intimate acquaintances called him, was destined to murder Alessandro; and it is worthy of notice that the Duke had received frequent warnings of his fate. A Perugian page, for instance, who suffered from some infirmity, saw in a dream that Lorenzino would kill his master. Astrologers predicted that the Duke must die by having his throat cut. One of them is said to have named Lorenzo de' Medici

as the assassin; and another described him so accurately that there was no mistaking the man. Moreover, Madonna Lucrezia Salviati wrote to the Duke from Rome that he should beware of a certain person, indicating Lorenzino; and her daughter, Madonna Maria, told him to his face she hated the young man, 'because I know he means to murder you, and murder you he will.' Nor was this all. The Duke's favourite body-servants mistrusted Lorenzino. On one occasion, when Alessandro and Lorenzino, attended by a certain Giomo, were escalading a wall at night, as was their wont upon illicit love-adventures, Giomo whispered to his master: 'Ah, my lord, do let me cut the rope, and rid ourselves of him!' To which the Duke replied: 'No, I do not want this; but if he could, I know he'd twist it round my neck.'

In spite, then, of these warnings and the want of confidence he felt, the Duke continually lived with Lorenzino, employing him as pander in his intrigues, and preferring his society to that of simpler men. When he rode abroad, he took this evil friend upon his crupper; although he knew for certain that Lorenzino had stolen a tight-fitting vest of mail he used to wear, and, while his arms were round his waist, was always meditating how to stick a poignard in his body. He trusted, so it seems, to his own great strength and to the other's physical weakness.

At this point, since Lorenzino is the principal actor in the two-act drama which follows, it will be well to introduce him to the reader in the words of Varchi, who was personally acquainted with him. Born at Florence in 1514, he was left early by his father's death to the sole care of his mother, Maria Soderini, 'a lady of rare prudence and goodness, who attended with the utmost pains and diligence to his education. No sooner, however, had he acquired the rudiments of humane learning, which, being of very quick parts, he imbibed

with incredible facility, than he began to display a restless mind, insatiable and appetitive of vice. Soon afterwards, under the rule and discipline of Filippo Strozzi, he made open sport of all things human and divine; and preferring the society of low persons, who not only flattered him but were congenial to his tastes, he gave free rein to his desires, especially in affairs of love, without regard for sex or age or quality, and in his secret soul, while he lavished feigned caresses upon every one he saw, felt no esteem for any living being. He thirsted strangely for glory, and omitted no point of deed or word that might, he thought, procure him the reputation of a man of spirit or of wit. He was lean of person, somewhat slightly built, and on this account people called him Lorenzino. He never laughed, but had a sneering smile; and although he was rather distinguished by grace than beauty, his countenance being dark and melancholy, still in the flower of his age he was beloved beyond all measure by Pope Clement; in spite of which he had it in his mind (according to what he said himself after killing the Duke Alessandro) to have murdered him. He brought Francesco di Raffaello de' Medici, the Pope's rival, who was a young man of excellent attainments and the highest hope, to such extremity that he lost his wits, and became the sport of the whole court at Rome, and was sent back, as a lesser evil, as a confirmed madman to Florence.' Varchi proceeds to relate how Lorenzino fell into disfavour with the Pope and the Romans by chopping the heads off statues from the arch of Constantine and other monuments; for which act of vandalism Molsa impeached him in the Roman Academy, and a price was set upon his head. Having returned to Florence, he proceeded to court Duke Alessandro, into whose confidence he wormed himself, pretending to play the spy upon the exiles, and affecting a personal timidity which put the Prince off his guard,

Alessandro called him 'the philosopher,' because he conversed in solitude with his own thoughts and seemed indifferent to wealth and office. But all this while Lorenzino was plotting how to murder him.

Giovio's account of this strange intimacy may be added, since it completes the picture I have drawn from Varchi:— 'Lorenzo made himself the accomplice and instrument of those amorous amusements for which the Duke had an insatiable appetite, with the object of deceiving him. He was singularly well furnished with all the scoundrelly arts and trained devices of the pander's trade; composed fine verses to incite to lust; wrote and represented comedies in Italian; and pretended to take pleasure only in such tricks and studies. Therefore he never carried arms like other courtiers, and feigned to be afraid of blood, a man who sought tranquillity at any price. Besides, he bore a pallid countenance and melancholy brow, walking alone, talking very little and with few persons. He haunted solitary places apart from the city, and showed such plain signs of hypochondria that some began covertly to pass jokes on him. Certain others, who were more acute, suspected that he was harbouring and devising in his mind some terrible enterprise.' The Prologue to Lorenzino's own comedy of 'Aridosiso' brings the sardonic, sneering, ironical man vividly before us. He calls himself 'un certo omiciatto, che non è nessun di voi che veggendolo non l'avesse a noia, pensando che egli abbia fatto una commedia;' and begs the audience to damn his play to save him the tedium of writing another. Criticised by the light of his subsequent actions, this prologue may even be understood to contain a covert promise of the murder he was meditating.

'In this way,' writes Varchi, 'the Duke had taken such familiarity with Lorenzo, that, not content with making use of him as a ruffian in his dealings with women, whether

religious or secular, maidens or wives or widows, noble or plebeian, young or elderly, as it might happen, he applied to him to procure for his pleasure a half-sister of Lorenzo's own mother, a young lady of marvellous beauty, but not less chaste than beautiful, who was the wife of Lionardo Ginori, and lived not far from the back entrance to the palace of the Medici.' Lorenzino undertook this odious commission, seeing an opportunity to work his designs against the Duke. But first he had to form an accomplice, since he could not hope to carry out the murder without help. A bravo, called Michele del Tavolaccino, but better known by the nickname of Scoronconcolo, struck him as a fitting instrument. He had procured this man's pardon for a homicide, and it appears that the fellow retained a certain sense of gratitude. Lorenzino began by telling the man there was a courtier who put insults upon him, and Scoronconcolo professed his readiness to kill the knave. 'Sia chi si voglia ; io l'ammazzerò, se fosse Cristo.' Up to the last minute the name of Alessandro was not mentioned. Having thus secured his assistant, Lorenzino chose a night when he knew that Alessandro Vitelli, captain of the Duke's guard, would be from home. Then, after supper, he whispered in Alessandro's ear that at last he had seduced his aunt with an offer of money, and that she would come to his, Lorenzo's chamber at the service of the Duke that night. Only the Duke must appear at the rendezvous alone, and when he had arrived, the lady should be fetched. 'Certain it is,' says Varchi, 'that the Duke, having donned a cloak of satin in the Neapolitan style, lined with sable, when he went to take his gloves, and there were some of mail and some of perfumed leather, hesitated awhile and said: "Which shall I choose, those of war, or those of love-making?"' He took the latter and went out with only four attendants, three of whom he dismissed upon the Piazza di San Marco, while

one was stationed just opposite Lorenzo's house, with strict orders not to stir if he should see folk enter or issue thence. But this fellow, called the Hungarian, after waiting a great while, returned to the Duke's chamber, and there went to sleep.

Meanwhile Lorenzino received Alessandro in his bedroom, where there was a good fire. The Duke unbuckled his sword, which Lorenzino took, and having entangled the belt with the hilt, so that it should not readily be drawn, laid it on the pillow. The Duke had flung himself already on the bed, and hid himself among the curtains—doing this, it is supposed, to save himself from the trouble of paying compliments to the lady when she should arrive. For Caterina Ginori had the fame of a fair speaker, and Alessandro was aware of his own incapacity to play the part of a respectful lover. Nothing could more strongly point the man's brutality than this act, which contributed in no small measure to his ruin.

Lorenzino left the Duke upon the bed, and went at once for Scoronconcolo. He told him that the enemy was caught, and bade him only mind the work he had to do. 'That will I do,' the bravo answered, 'even though it were the Duke himself.' 'You've hit the mark,' said Lorenzino with a face of joy; 'he cannot slip through our fingers. Come!' So they mounted to the bedroom, and Lorenzino, knowing where the Duke was laid, cried: 'Sir, are you asleep?' and therewith ran him through the back. Alessandro was sleeping, or pretending to sleep, face downwards, and the sword passed through his kidneys and diaphragm. But it did not kill him. He slipped from the bed, and seized a stool to parry the next blow. Scoronconcolo now stabbed him in the face, while Lorenzino forced him back upon the bed; and then began a hideous struggle. In order to prevent his cries, Lorenzino doubled his fist into the Duke's mouth. Alessandro seized

the thumb between his teeth, and held it in a vice until he died. This disabled Lorenzino, who still lay upon his victim's body, and Scoronconcolo could not strike for fear of wounding his master. Between the writhing couple he made, however, several passes with his sword, which only pierced the mattress. Then he drew a knife and drove it into the Duke's throat, and bored about till he had severed veins and windpipe.

IV.—The Flight of Lorenzino de' Medici

Alessandro was dead. His body fell to earth. The two murderers, drenched with blood, lifted it up, and placed it on the bed, wrapped in the curtains, as they had found him first. Then Lorenzino went to the window, which looked out upon the Via Larga, and opened it to rest and breathe a little air. After this he called for Scoronconcolo's boy, Il Freccia, and bade him look upon the dead man. Il Freccia recognised the Duke. But why Lorenzino did this, no one knew. It seemed, as Varchi says, that, having planned the murder with great ability, and executed it with daring, his good sense and good luck forsook him. He made no use of the crime he had committed; and from that day forward till his own assassination, nothing prospered with him. Indeed, the murder of Alessandro appears to have been almost motiveless, considered from the point of view of practical politics. Varchi assumes that Lorenzino's burning desire of glory prompted the deed; and when he had acquired the notoriety he sought, there was an end to his ambition. This view is confirmed by the Apology he wrote and published for his act. It remains one of the most pregnant, bold, and brilliant pieces of writing which we possess in favour of tyrannicide from that epoch of insolent crime and audacious rhetoric. So energetic is the style, and so biting the invective of this masterpiece, in which the author

stabs a second time his victim, that both Giordani and Leopardi affirmed it to be the only true monument of eloquence in the Italian language. If thirst for glory was Lorenzino's principal incentive, immediate glory was his guerdon. He escaped that same night with Scoronconcolo and Freccia to Bologna, where he stayed to dress his thumb, and then passed forward to Venice. Filippo Strozzi there welcomed him as the new Brutus, gave him money, and promised to marry his two sons to the two sisters of the tyrant-killer. Poems were written and published by the most famous men of letters, including Benedetto Varchi and Francesco Maria Molsa, in praise of the Tuscan Brutus, the liberator of his country from a tyrant. A bronze medal was struck bearing his name, with a profile copied from Michelangelo's bust of Brutus. On the obverse are two daggers and a cup, and the date viii. id. Jan.

The immediate consequence of Alessandro's murder was the elevation of Cosimo, son of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, and second cousin of Lorenzino, to the duchy. At the ceremony of his investiture with the ducal honours, Cosimo solemnly undertook to revenge Alessandro's murder. In the following March he buried his predecessor with pomp in San Lorenzo. The body was placed beside the bones of the Duke of Urbino in the marble chest of Michelangelo, and here not many years ago it was discovered. Soon afterwards Lorenzino was declared a rebel. His portrait was painted according to old Tuscan precedent, head downwards, and suspended by one foot, upon the wall of the fort built by Alessandro. His house was cut in twain from roof to pavement, and a narrow lane was driven through it, which received the title of Traitor's Alley, *Chiasso del Traditore*. The price of four thousand golden florins was put upon his head, together with the further sum of one hundred florins per

annum in perpetuity to be paid to the murderer and his direct heirs in succession, by the Otto di Balia. Moreover, the man who killed Lorenzino was to enjoy all civic privileges; exemption from all taxes, ordinary and extraordinary; the right of carrying arms, together with two attendants, in the city and the whole domain of Florence; and the further prerogative of restoring ten outlaws at his choice. If Lorenzino could be captured and brought alive to Florence, the whole of this reward would be doubled.

This decree was promulgated in April 1537, and thenceforward Lorenzino de' Medici lived a doomed man. The assassin, who had been proclaimed a Brutus by Tuscan exiles and humanistic enthusiasts, was regarded as a Judas by the common people. Ballads were written on him with the title of the 'Piteous and sore lament made unto himself by Lorenzino de' Medici, who murdered the most illustrious Duke Alessandro.' He had become a wild beast, whom it was honourable to hunt down, a pest which it was righteous to extirpate. Yet fate delayed nine years to overtake him. What remains to be told about his story must be extracted from the narrative of the bravo who succeeded, with the aid of an accomplice, in despatching him at Venice.[1] So far as possible, I shall use the man's own words, translating them literally, and omitting only unimportant details. The narrative throws brilliant light upon the manners and movements of professional cut-throats at that period in Italy. It seems to have been taken down from the hero Francesco, or Cecco, Bibboni's lips; and there is no doubt that we possess in it a valuable historical document for the illustration of

[1] Those who are interested in such matters may profitably compare this description of a planned murder in the sixteenth century with the account written by Ambrogio Tremazzi of the way in which he tracked and slew Troilo Orsini in Paris in the year 1577. It is given by Gnoli in his *Vittoria Accoramboni*, pp. 404–414.

contemporary customs. It offers in all points a curious parallel to Cellini's account of his own homicides and hair-breadth escapes. Moreover, it is confirmed in its minutest circumstances by the records of the criminal courts of Venice in the sixteenth century. This I can attest from recent examination of MSS. relating to the *Signori di Notte* and the *Esecutori contro la Bestemmia*, which are preserved among the Archives at the Frari.

V.—The Murder of Lorenzino de' Medici

'When I returned from Germany,' begins Bibboni, 'where I had been in the pay of the Emperor, I found at Vicenza Bebo da Volterra, who was staying in the house of M. Antonio da Roma, a nobleman of that city. This gentleman employed him because of a great feud he had; and he was mighty pleased, moreover, at my coming, and desired that I too should take up my quarters in his palace.'

This paragraph strikes the keynote of the whole narrative, and introduces us to the company we are about to keep. The noblemen of that epoch, if they had private enemies, took into their service soldiers of adventure, partly to protect their persons, but also to make war, when occasion offered, on their foes. The *bravi*, as they were styled, had quarters assigned them in the basement of the palace, where they might be seen swaggering about the door or flaunting their gay clothes behind the massive iron bars of the windows which opened on the streets. When their master went abroad at night they followed him, and were always at hand to perform secret services in love affairs, assassination, and espial. For the rest, they haunted taverns, and kept up correspondence with prostitutes. An Italian city had a whole population of such fellows, the offscourings of armies, drawn from

all nations, divided by their allegiance of the time being into hostile camps, but united by community of interest and occupation, and ready to combine against the upper class, upon whose vices, enmities, and cowardice they throve.

Bibboni proceeds to say how another gentleman of Vicenza, M. Francesco Manente, had at this time a feud with certain of the Guazzi and the Laschi, which had lasted several years, and cost the lives of many members of both parties and their following. M. Francesco being a friend of M. Antonio, besought that gentleman to lend him Bibboni and Bebo for a season; and the two *bravi* went together with their new master to Celsano, a village in the neighbourhood. 'There both parties had estates, and all of them kept armed men in their houses, so that not a day passed without feats of arms, and always there was some one killed or wounded. One day, soon afterwards, the leaders of our party resolved to attack the foe in their house, where we killed two, and the rest, numbering five men, entrenched themselves in a ground-floor apartment; whereupon we took possession of their harquebuses and other arms, which forced them to abandon the villa and retire to Vicenza; and within a short space of time this great feud was terminated by an ample peace.' After this Bebo took service with the Rector of the University in Padua, and was transferred by his new patron to Milan. Bibboni remained at Vicenza with M. Galeazzo della Seta, who stood in great fear of his life, notwithstanding the peace which had been concluded between the two factions. At the end of ten months he returned to M. Antonio da Roma and his six brothers, 'all of whom being very much attached to me, they proposed that I should live my life with them, for good or ill, and be treated as one of the family; upon the understanding that if war broke out and I wanted to take part in it, I should always have twenty-five crowns and arms

and horse, with welcome home, so long as I lived; and in case I did not care to join the troops, the same provision for my maintenance.'

From these details we comprehend the sort of calling which a bravo of Bibboni's species followed. Meanwhile Bebo was at Milan. 'There it happened that M. Francesco Vinta, of Volterra, was on embassy from the Duke of Florence. He saw Bebo, and asked him what he was doing in Milan, and Bebo answered that he was a knight errant.' This phrase, derived no doubt from the romantic epics then in vogue, was a pretty euphemism for a rogue of Bebo's quality. The ambassador now began cautiously to sound his man, who seems to have been outlawed from the Tuscan duchy, telling him he knew a way by which he might return with favour to his home, and at last disclosing the affair of Lorenzo. Bebo was puzzled at first, but when he understood the matter, he professed his willingness, took letters from the envoy to the Duke of Florence, and, in a private audience with Cosimo, informed him that he was ready to attempt Lorenzino's assassination. He added that 'he had a comrade fit for such a job, whose fellow for the business could not easily be found.'

Bebo now travelled to Vicenza, and opened the whole matter to Bibboni, who weighed it well, and at last, being convinced that the Duke's commission to his comrade was *bona fide*, determined to take his share in the undertaking. The two agreed to have no accomplices. They went to Venice, and 'I,' says Bibboni, 'being most intimately acquainted with all that city, and provided there with many friends, soon quietly contrived to know where Lorenzino lodged, and took a room in the neighbourhood, and spent some days in seeing how we best might rule our conduct.' Bibboni soon discovered that Lorenzino never left his palace; and he therefore remained in much perplexity, until, by good

luck, Ruberto Strozzi arrived from France in Venice, bringing in his train a Navarrese servant, who had the nickname of Spagnoletto. This fellow was a great friend of the bravo. They met, and Bibboni told him that he should like to go and kiss the hands of Messer Ruberto, whom he had known in Rome. Strozzi inhabited the same palace as Lorenzino. 'When we arrived there, both Messer Ruberto and Lorenzo were leaving the house, and there were around them so many gentlemen and other persons, that I could not present myself, and both straightway stepped into the gondola. Then I, not having seen Lorenzo for a long while past, and because he was very quietly attired, could not recognise the man exactly, but only as it were between certainty and doubt. Wherefore I said to Spagnoletto, "I think I know that gentleman, but don't remember where I saw him." And Messer Ruberto was giving him his right hand. Then Spagnoletto answered, "You know him well enough; he is Messer Lorenzo. But see you tell this to nobody. He goes by the name of Messer Dario, because he lives in great fear for his safety, and people don't know that he is now in Venice." I answered that I marvelled much, and if I could have helped him, would have done so willingly. Then I asked where they were going, and he said, to dine with Messer Giovanni della Casa, who was the Pope's Legate. I did not leave the man till I had drawn from him all I required.'

Thus spoke the Italian Judas. The appearance of La Casa on the scene is interesting. He was the celebrated author of the scandalous 'Capitolo del Forno,' the author of many sublime and melancholy sonnets, who was now at Venice, prosecuting a charge of heresy against Pier Paolo Vergerio, and paying his addresses to a noble lady of the Quirini family. It seems that on the territory of San Marco he made common cause with the exiles from Florence, for he

was himself by birth a Florentine, and he had no objection to take Brutus-Lorenzino by the hand.

After the noblemen had rowed off in their gondola to dine with the Legate, Bibboni and his friend entered their palace, where he found another old acquaintance, the house-steward, or *spenditore* of Lorenzo. From him he gathered much useful information. Pietro Strozzi, it seems, had allowed the tyrannicide one thousand five hundred crowns a year, with the keep of three brave and daring companions (*tre compagni bravi e facinorosi*), and a palace worth fifty crowns on lease. But Lorenzo had just taken another on the Campo di San Polo at three hundred crowns a year, for which swagger (*altura*) Pietro Strozzi had struck a thousand crowns off his allowance. Bibboni also learned that he was keeping house with his uncle, Alessandro Soderini, another Florentine outlaw, and that he was ardently in love with a certain beautiful Barozza. This woman was apparently one of the grand courtesans of Venice. He further ascertained the date when he was going to move into the palace at San Polo, and, 'to put it briefly, knew everything he did, and, as it were, how many times a day he spit.' Such were the intelligences of the servants' hall, and of such value were they to men of Bibboni's calling.

In the Carnival of 1546 Lorenzo meant to go masqued in the habit of a gipsy woman to the square of San Spirito, where there was to be a joust. Great crowds of people would assemble, and Bibboni hoped to do his business there. The assassination, however, failed on this occasion, and Lorenzo took up his abode in the palace he had hired upon the Campo di San Polo. This Campo is one of the largest open places in Venice, shaped irregularly, with a finely curving line upon the western side, where two of the noblest private houses in the city are still standing. Nearly opposite

these, in the south-western angle, stands, detached, the little old church of San Polo. One of its side entrances opens upon the square; the other on a lane, which leads eventually to the Frari. There is nothing in Bibboni's narrative to make it clear where Lorenzo hired his dwelling. But it would seem from certain things which he says later on, that in order to enter the church his victim had to cross the square. Meanwhile Bibboni took the precaution of making friends with a shoemaker, whose shop commanded the whole Campo, including Lorenzo's palace. In this shop he began to spend much of his time; 'and oftentimes I feigned to be asleep; but God knows whether I was sleeping, for my mind, at any rate, was wide-awake.'

A second convenient occasion for murdering Lorenzo soon seemed to offer. He was bidden to dine with Monsignor della Casa; and Bibboni, putting a bold face on, entered the Legate's palace, having left Bebo below in the loggia, fully resolved to do the business. 'But we found,' he says, 'that they had gone to dine at Murano, so that we remained with our tabors in their bag.' The island of Murano at that period was a favourite resort of the Venetian nobles, especially of the more literary and artistic, who kept country-houses there, where they enjoyed the fresh air of the lagoons and the quiet of their gardens.

The third occasion, after all these weeks of watching, brought success to Bibboni's schemes. He had observed how Lorenzo occasionally so far broke his rules of caution as to go on foot, past the church of San Polo, to visit the beautiful Barozza; and he resolved, if possible, to catch him on one of these journeys. 'It so chanced on the 28th of February, which was the second Sunday of Lent, that having gone, as was my wont, to pry out whether Lorenzo would give orders for going abroad that day, I entered the shoemaker's

shop, and stayed awhile, until Lorenzo came to the window with a napkin round his neck—for he was combing his hair —and at the same moment I saw a certain Giovan Battista Martelli, who kept his sword for the defence of Lorenzo's person, enter and come forth again. Concluding that they would probably go abroad, I went home to get ready and procure the necessary weapons, and there I found Bebo asleep in bed, and made him get up at once, and we came to our accustomed post of observation, by the church of San Polo, where our men would have to pass.' Bibboni now retired to his friend the shoemaker's, and Bebo took up his station at one of the side-doors of San Polo; 'and, as good luck would have it, Giovan Battista Martelli came forth, and walked a piece in front, and then Lorenzo came, and then Alessandro Soderini, going the one behind the other, like storks, and Lorenzo, on entering the church, and lifting up the curtain of the door, was seen from the opposite door by Bebo, who at the same time noticed how I had left the shop, and so we met upon the street as we had agreed, and he told me that Lorenzo was inside the church.'

To any one who knows the Campo di San Polo, it will be apparent that Lorenzo had crossed from the western side of the piazza and entered the church by what is technically called its northern door. Bebo, stationed at the southern door, could see him when he pushed the heavy *stoia* or leather curtain aside, and at the same time could observe Bibboni's movements in the cobbler's shop. Meanwhile Lorenzo walked across the church and came to the same door where Bebo had been standing. 'I saw him issue from the church and take the main street; then came Alessandro Soderini, and I walked last of all; and when we reached the point we had determined on, I jumped in front of Alessandro with the poignard in my hand, crying, "Hold hard, Alessandro, and

get along with you in God's name, for we are not here for you!" He then threw himself around my waist, and grasped my arms, and kept on calling out. Seeing how wrong I had been to try to spare his life, I wrenched myself as well as I could from his grip, and with my lifted poignard struck him, as God willed, above the eyebrow, and a little blood trickled from the wound. He, in high fury, gave me such a thrust that I fell backward, and the ground besides was slippery from having rained a little. Then Alessandro drew his sword, which he carried in its scabbard, and thrust at me in front, and struck me on the corslet, which for my good fortune was of double mail. Before I could get ready I received three passes, which, had I worn a doublet instead of that mailed corslet, would certainly have run me through. At the fourth pass I had regained my strength and spirit, and closed with him, and stabbed him four times in the head, and being so close he could not use his sword, but tried to parry with his hand and hilt, and I, as God willed, struck him at the wrist below the sleeve of mail, and cut his hand off clean, and gave him then one last stroke on his head. Thereupon he begged for God's sake spare his life, and I, in trouble about Bebo, left him in the arms of a Venetian nobleman, who held him back from jumping into the canal.'

Who this Venetian nobleman, found unexpectedly upon the scene, was, does not appear. Nor, what is still more curious, do we hear anything of that Martelli, the bravo, 'who kept his sword for the defence of Lorenzo's person.' The one had arrived accidentally, it seems. The other must have been a coward and escaped from the scuffle.

'When I turned,' proceeds Bibboni, 'I found Lorenzo on his knees. He raised himself, and I, in anger, gave him a great cut across the head, which split it in two pieces, and laid him at my feet, and he never rose again.'

VI.—The Escape of the Bravi

Bebo, meanwhile, had made off from the scene of action. And Bibboni, taking to his heels, came up with him in the little square of San Marcello. They now ran for their lives till they reached the traghetto di San Spirito, where they threw their poignards into the water, remembering that no man might carry these in Venice under penalty of the galleys. Bibboni's white hose were drenched with blood. He therefore agreed to separate from Bebo, having named a rendezvous. Left alone, his ill luck brought him face to face with twenty constables (*sbirri*). 'In a moment I conceived that they knew everything, and were come to capture me, and of a truth I saw that it was over with me. As swiftly as I could I quickened pace and got into a church, near to which was the house of a Compagnia, and the one opened into the other, and knelt down and prayed, commending myself with fervour to God for my deliverance and safety. Yet while I prayed, I kept my eyes well open and saw the whole band pass the church, except one man who entered, and I strained my sight so that I seemed to see behind as well as in front, and then it was I longed for my poignard, for I should not have heeded being in a church.' But the constable, it soon appeared, was not looking for Bibboni. So he gathered up his courage, and ran for the Church of San Spirito, where the Padre Andrea Volterrano was preaching to a great congregation. He hoped to go in by one door and out by the other, but the crowd prevented him, and he had to turn back and face the *sbirri*. One of them followed him, having probably caught sight of the blood upon his hose. Then Bibboni resolved to have done with the fellow, and rushed at him, and flung him down with his head upon the pavement, and ran like mad, and came at last, all out of breath, to San Marco.

It seems clear that before Bibboni separated from Bebo they had crossed the water, for the Sestiere di San Polo is separated from the Sestiere di San Marco by the Grand Canal. And this they must have done at the traghetto di San Spirito. Neither the church nor the traghetto are now in existence, and this part of the story is therefore obscure.[1] Having reached San Marco, he took a gondola at the Ponte della Paglia, where tourists are now wont to stand and contemplate the Ducal Palace and the Bridge of Sighs. First, he sought the house of a woman of the town who was his friend; then changed purpose, and rowed to the palace of the Count Salici da Collalto. 'He was a great friend and intimate of ours, because Bebo and I had done him many and great services in times passed. There I knocked; and Bebo opened the door, and when he saw me dabbled with blood, he marvelled that I had not come to grief and fallen into the hands of justice, and, indeed, had feared as much because I had remained so long away.' It appears, therefore, that the Palazzo Collalto was their rendezvous. 'The Count was from home; but being known to all his people, I played the master and went into the kitchen to the fire, and with soap and water turned my hose, which had been white, to a grey colour.' This is a very delicate way of saying that he washed out the blood of Alessandro and Lorenzo!

Soon after the Count returned, and 'lavished caresses' upon Bebo and his precious comrade. They did not tell

[1] So far as I can discover, the only church of San Spirito in Venice was a building on the island of San Spirito, erected by Sansavino, which belonged to the Sestiere di S. Croce, and which was suppressed in 1656. Its plate and the fine pictures which Titian painted there were transferred at that date to S. M. della Salute. I cannot help inferring that either Bibboni's memory failed him, or that his words were wrongly understood by printer or amanuensis. If for S. Spirito we substitute S. Stefano, the account would be intelligible.

him what they had achieved that morning, but put him off with a story of having settled a *sbirro* in a quarrel about a girl. Then the Count invited them to dinner; and being himself bound to entertain the first physician of Venice, requested them to take it in an upper chamber. He and his secretary served them with their own hands at table. When the physician arrived, the Count went downstairs; and at this moment a messenger came from Lorenzo's mother, begging the doctor to go at once to San Polo, for that her son had been murdered and Soderini wounded to the death. It was now no longer possible to conceal their doings from the Count, who told them to pluck up courage and abide in patience. He had himself to dine and take his siesta, and then to attend a meeting of the Council.

About the hour of vespers, Bibboni determined to seek better refuge. Followed at a discreet distance by Bebo, he first called at their lodgings and ordered supper. Two priests came in and fell into conversation with them. But something in the behaviour of one of these good men roused his suspicions. So they left the house, took a gondola, and told the man to row hard to S. Maria Zobenigo. On the way he bade him put them on shore, paid him well, and ordered him to wait for them. They landed near the palace of the Spanish embassy; and here Bibboni meant to seek sanctuary. For it must be remembered that the houses of ambassadors, no less than of princes of the Church, were inviolable. They offered the most convenient harbouring-places to rascals. Charles V., moreover, was deeply interested in the vengeance taken on Alessandro de' Medici's murderer, for his own natural daughter was Alessandro's widow and Duchess of Florence. In the palace they were met with much courtesy by about forty Spaniards, who showed considerable curiosity, and told them that Lorenzo and Alessandro Soderini had been mur-

dered that morning by two men whose description answered to their appearance. Bibboni put their questions by and asked to see the ambassador. He was not at home. In that case, said Bibboni, take us to the secretary. Attended by some thirty Spaniards, 'with great joy and gladness,' they were shown into the secretary's chamber. He sent the rest of the folk away, 'and locked the door well, and then embraced and kissed us before we had said a word, and afterwards bade us talk freely without any fear.' When Bibboni had told the whole story, he was again embraced and kissed by the secretary, who thereupon left them and went to the private apartment of the ambassador. Shortly after he returned and led them by a winding staircase into the presence of his master. The ambassador greeted them with great honour, told them he would strain all the power of the empire to hand them in safety over to Duke Cosimo, and that he had already sent a courier to the Emperor with the good news.

So they remained in hiding in the Spanish embassy; and in ten days' time commands were received from Charles himself that everything should be done to convey them safely to Florence. The difficulty was how to smuggle them out of Venice, where the police of the Republic were on watch, and Florentine outlaws were mounting guard on sea and shore to catch them. The ambassador began by spreading reports on the Rialto every morning of their having been seen at Padua, at Verona, in Friuli. He then hired a palace at Malghera, near Mestre, and went out daily with fifty Spaniards, and took carriage or amused himself with horse exercise and shooting. The Florentines, who were on watch, could only discover from his people that he did this for amusement. When he thought that he had put them sufficiently off their guard, the ambassador one day took Bibboni and Bebo out by Canaregio and Mestre to Malghera, concealed in his own gondola, with

the whole train of Spaniards in attendance. And though, on landing, the Florentines challenged them, they durst not interfere with an ambassador or come to battle with his men. So Bebo and Bibboni were hustled into a coach, and afterwards provided with two comrades and four horses. They rode for ninety miles without stopping to sleep, and on the day following this long journey reached Trento, having probably threaded the mountain valleys above Bassano, for Bibboni speaks of a certain village where the people talked half German. The Imperial Ambassador at Trento forwarded them next day to Mantua; from Mantua they came to Piacenza; thence, passing through the valley of the Taro, crossing the Apennines at Cisa, descending on Pontremoli, and reaching Pisa at night, the fourteenth day after their escape from Venice.

When they arrived at Pisa, Duke Cosimo was supping. So they went to an inn, and next morning presented themselves to his Grace. Cosimo received them kindly, assured them of his gratitude, confirmed them in the enjoyment of their rewards and privileges, and swore that they might rest secure of his protection in all parts of his dominion. We may imagine how the men caroused together after this reception. As Bibboni adds, 'We were now able for the whole time of life left us to live splendidly, without a thought or care.' The last words of his narrative are these: 'Bebo from Pisa, at what date I know not, went home to Volterra, his native town, and there finished his days; while I abode in Florence, where I have had no further wish to hear of wars, but to live my life in holy peace.'

So ends the story of the two *bravi*. We have reason to believe, from some contemporary documents which Cantù has brought to light, that Bibboni exaggerated his own part in the affair. Luca Martelli, writing to Varchi, says that it

was Bebo who clove Lorenzo's skull with a cutlass. He adds this curious detail, that the weapons of both men were poisoned, and that the wound inflicted by Bibboni on Soderini's hand was a slight one. Yet, the poignard being poisoned, Soderini died of it. In other respects Martelli's brief account agrees with that given by Bibboni, who probably did no more, his comrade being dead, than claim for himself, at some expense of truth, the lion's share of their heroic action.

VII.—Lorenzino Brutus

It remains to ask ourselves, What opinion can be justly formed of Lorenzino's character and motives? When he murdered his cousin, was he really actuated by the patriotic desire to rid his country of a monster? Did he imitate the Roman Brutus in the noble spirit of his predecessors, Olgiati and Boscoli, martyrs to the creed of tyrannicide? Or must this crowning action of a fretful life be explained, like his previous mutilation of the statues on the Arch of Constantine, by a wild thirst for notoriety? Did he hope that the exiles would return to Florence, and that he would enjoy an honourable life, an immortality of glorious renown? Did envy for his cousin's greatness and resentment of his undisguised contempt—the passions of one who had been used for vile ends—conscious of self-degradation and the loss of honour, yet mindful of his intellectual superiority—did these emotions take fire in him and mingle with a scholar's reminiscences of antique heroism, prompting him to plan a deed which should at least assume the show of patriotic zeal, and prove indubitable courage in its perpetrator? Did he, again, perhaps imagine, being next in blood to Alessandro and direct heir to the ducal crown by the Imperial Settlement of 1530, that the city would elect her liberator for her ruler?

Alfieri and Niccolini, having taken, as it were, a brief in favour of tyrannicide, praised Lorenzino as a hero. De Musset, who wrote a considerable drama on his story, painted him as a *roué* corrupted by society, enfeebled by circumstance, soured by commerce with an uncongenial world, who hides at the bottom of his mixed nature enough of real nobility to make him the leader of a forlorn hope for the liberties of Florence. This is the most favourable construction we can put upon Lorenzo's conduct. Yet some facts of the case warn us to suspend our judgment. He seems to have formed no plan for the liberation of his fellow-citizens. He gave no pledge of self-devotion by avowing his deed and abiding by its issues. He showed none of the qualities of a leader, whether in the cause of freedom or of his own dynastic interests, after the murder. He escaped as soon as he was able, as secretly as he could manage, leaving the city in confusion, and exposing himself to the obvious charge of abominable treason. So far as the Florentines knew, his assassination of their Duke was but a piece of private spite, executed with infernal craft. It is true that when he seized the pen in exile, he did his best to claim the guerdon of a patriot, and to throw the blame of failure on the Florentines. In his Apology, and in a letter written to Francesco de' Medici, he taunts them with lacking the spirit to extinguish tyranny when he had slain the tyrant. He summons plausible excuses to his aid—the impossibility of taking persons of importance into his confidence, the loss of blood he suffered from his wound, the uselessness of rousing citizens whom events proved over-indolent for action. He declares that he has nothing to regret. Having proved by deeds his will to serve his country, he has saved his life in order to spend it for her when occasion offered. But these arguments, invented after the catastrophe, these words, so bravely penned when action ought to have

confirmed his resolution, do not meet the case. It was no deed of a true hero to assassinate a despot, knowing or half knowing that the despot's subjects would immediately elect another. Their languor could not, except rhetorically, be advanced in defence of his own flight.

The historian is driven to seek both the explanation and palliation of Lorenzo's failure in the temper of his times. There was enough daring left in Florence to carry through a plan of brilliant treason, modelled on an antique Roman tragedy. But there was not moral force in the protagonist to render that act salutary, not public energy sufficient in his fellow-citizens to accomplish his drama of deliverance. Lorenzo was corrupt. Florence was flaccid. Evil manners had emasculated the hero. In the state the last spark of independence had expired with Ferrucci.

Still I have not without forethought dubbed this man a Cinque Cento Brutus. Like much of the art and literature of his century, his action may be regarded as a *bizarre* imitation of the antique manner. Without the force and purpose of a Roman, Lorenzo set himself to copy Plutarch's men—just as sculptors carved Neptunes and Apollos without the dignity and serenity of the classic style. The antique faith was wanting to both murderer and craftsman in those days. Even as Renaissance work in art is too often aimless, decorative, vacant of intention, so Lorenzino's Brutus tragedy seems but the snapping of a pistol in void air. He had the audacity but not the ethical consistency of his crime. He played the part of Brutus like a Roscius, perfect in its histrionic details. And it doubtless gave to this skilful actor a supreme satisfaction—salving over many wounds of vanity, quenching the poignant thirst for things impossible and draughts of fame—that he could play it on no mimic stage, but on the theatre of Europe. The weakness of his conduct was the central

weakness of his age and country. Italy herself lacked moral purpose, sense of righteous necessity, that consecration of self to a noble cause, which could alone have justified Lorenzo's perfidy. Confused memories of Judith, Jael, Brutus, and other classical tyrannicides, exalted his imagination. Longing for violent emotions, jaded with pleasure which had palled, discontented with his wasted life, jealous of his brutal cousin, appetitive to the last of glory, he conceived his scheme. Having conceived, he executed it with that which never failed in Cinque Cento Italy—the artistic spirit of perfection. When it was over, he shrugged his shoulders, wrote his magnificent Apology with a style of adamant upon a plate of steel, and left it for the outlaws of Filippo Strozzi's faction to deal with the crisis he had brought about. For some years he dragged out an ignoble life in obscurity, and died at last, as Varchi puts it, more by his own carelessness than by the watchful animosity of others. Over the wild, turbid, clever, incomprehensible, inconstant hero-artist's grave we write our *Requiescat*. Clio, as she takes the pen in hand to record this prayer, smiles disdainfully and turns to graver business.

TWO DRAMATISTS OF THE LAST CENTURY

THERE are few contrasts more striking than that which is presented by the memoirs of Goldoni and Alfieri. Both of these men bore names highly distinguished in the history of Italian literature. Both of them were framed by nature with strongly marked characters, and fitted to perform a special work in the world. Both have left behind them records of their lives and literary labours, singularly illustrative of their peculiar differences. There is no instance in which we see more clearly the philosophical value of autobiographies, than in these vivid pictures which the great Italian tragedian and comic author have delineated. Some of the most interesting works of Lionardo da Vinci, Giorgione, Albert Dürer, Rembrandt, Rubens, and Andrea del Sarto, are their portraits painted by themselves. These pictures exhibit not only the lineaments of the masters, but also their art. The hand which drew them was the hand which drew the 'Last Supper,' or the 'Madonna of the Tribune:' colour, method, chiaroscuro, all that makes up manner in painting, may be studied on the same canvas as that which faithfully represents the features of the man whose genius gave his style its special character. We seem to understand the clear calm majesty of Lionardo's manner, the silver-grey harmonies and smooth facility of Andrea's Madonnas, the better for looking at their faces drawn by their own hands at Florence. And if this be the case with a dumb picture, how far higher must be the

interest and importance of the written life of a known author! Not only do we recognise in its composition the style and temper and habits of thought which are familiar to us in his other writings; but we also hear from his own lips how these were formed, how his tastes took their peculiar direction, what circumstances acted on his character, what hopes he had, and where he failed. Even should his autobiography not bear the marks of uniform candour, it probably reveals more of the actual truth, more of the man's real nature in its height and depth, than any memoir written by friend or foe. Its unconscious admissions, its general spirit, and the inferences which we draw from its perusal, are far more valuable than any mere statement of facts or external analysis, however scientific. When we become acquainted with the series of events which led to the conception or attended the production of some masterpiece of literature, a new light is thrown upon its beauties, fresh life bursts forth from every chapter, and we seem to have a nearer and more personal interest in its success. What a powerful sensation, for instance, is that which we experience when, after studying the 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' Gibbon tells us how the thought of writing it came to him upon the Capitol, among the ruins of dead Rome, and within hearing of the mutter of the monks of Ara Cœli, and how he finished it one night by Lake Geneva, and laid his pen down and walked forth and saw the stars above his terrace at Lausanne!

The memoirs of Alfieri and Goldoni are not deficient in any of the characteristics of good autobiography. They seem to bear upon their face the stamp of truthfulness, they illustrate their authors' lives with marvellous lucidity, and they are full of interest as stories. But it is to the contrast which they present that our attention should be chiefly drawn. Other biographies may be as interesting and amusing. None

show in a more marked manner two distinct natures endowed with genius for one art, and yet designed in every possible particular for different branches of that art. Alfieri embodies Tragedy; Goldoni is the spirit of Comedy. They are both Italians: their tragedies and comedies are by no means cosmopolitan; but this national identity of character only renders more remarkable the individual divergences by which they were impelled into their different paths. Thalia seems to have made the one, body, soul, and spirit; and Melpomene the other; each goddess launched her favourite into circumstances suited to the evolution of his genius, and presided over his development, so that at his death she might exclaim, —Behold the living model of my Art!

Goldoni was born at Venice in the year 1707; he had already reached celebrity when Alfieri saw the light for the first time, in 1749, at Asti. Goldoni's grandfather was a native of Modena, who had settled in Venice, and there lived with the prodigality of a rich and ostentatious 'bourgeois.' 'Amid riot and luxury did I enter the world,' says the poet, after enumerating the banquets and theatrical displays with which the old Goldoni entertained his guests in his Venetian palace and country-house. Venice at that date was certainly the proper birthplace for a comic poet. The splendour of the Renaissance had thoroughly habituated her nobles to pleasures of the sense, and had enervated their proud, maritime character, while the great name of the republic robbed them of the caution for which they used to be conspicuous. Yet the real strength of Venice was almost spent, and nothing remained but outward insolence and prestige. Everything was gay about Goldoni in his earliest childhood. Puppet-shows were built to amuse him by his grandfather. 'My mother,' he says, 'took charge of my education, and my father of my amusements.'

Let us turn to the opening scene in Alfieri's life, and mark the difference. A father above sixty, 'noble, wealthy, and respectable,' who died before his son had reached the age of one year old. A mother devoted to religion, the widow of one marquis, and after the death of a second husband, Alfieri's father, married for the third time to a nobleman of ancient birth. These were Alfieri's parents. He was born in a solemn palazzo in the country town of Asti, and at the age of five already longed for death as an escape from disease and other earthly troubles. So noble and so wealthy was the youthful poet that an abbé was engaged to carry out his education, but not to teach him more than a count should know. Except this worthy man he had no companions whatever. Strange ideas possessed the boy. He ruminated on his melancholy, and when eight years old attempted suicide. At this age he was sent to the academy at Turin, attended, as befitted a lad of his rank, by a man-servant, who was to remain and wait on him at school. Alfieri stayed here several years without revisiting his home, tyrannised over by the valet who added to his grandeur, constantly subject to sickness, and kept in almost total ignorance by his incompetent preceptors. The gloom and pride and stoicism of his temperament were augmented by this unnatural discipline. His spirit did not break, but took a haughtier and more disdainful tone. He became familiar with misfortunes. He learned to brood over and intensify his passions. Every circumstance of his life seemed strung up to a tragic pitch. This at least is the impression which remains upon our mind after reading in his memoirs the narrative of what must in many of its details have been a common schoolboy's life at that time.

Meanwhile, what had become of young Goldoni? His boyhood was as thoroughly plebeian, various, and comic as Alfieri's had been patrician, monotonous, and tragical.

Instead of one place of residence, we read of twenty. Scrape succeeds to scrape, adventure to adventure. Knowledge of the world, and some book learning also, flow in upon the boy, and are eagerly caught up by him and heterogeneously amalgamated in his mind. Alfieri learned nothing, wrote nothing, in his youth, and heard his parents say—'A nobleman need never strive to be a doctor of the faculties.' Goldoni had a little medicine and much law thrust upon him. At eight he wrote a comedy, and ere long began to read the plays of Plautus, Terence, Aristophanes, and Machiavelli. Between the nature of the two poets there was a marked and characteristic difference as to their mode of labour and of acquiring knowledge. Both of them loved fame, and wrought for it; but Alfieri did so from a sense of pride and a determination to excel; while Goldoni loved the approbation of his fellows, sought their compliments, and basked in the sunshine of smiles. Alfieri wrote with labour. Each tragedy he composed went through a triple process of composition, and received frequent polishing when finished. Goldoni dashed off his pieces with the greatest ease on every possible subject. He once produced sixteen comedies in one theatrical season. Alfieri's were like lion's whelps—brought forth with difficulty, and at long intervals; Goldoni's, like the brood of a hare—many, frequent, and as agile as their parent. Alfieri amassed knowledge scrupulously, but with infinite toil. He mastered Greek and Hebrew when he was past forty. Goldoni never gave himself the least trouble to learn anything, but trusted to the ready wit, good memory, and natural powers, which helped him in a hundred strange emergencies. Power of will and pride sustained the one; facility and a good-humoured vanity the other. This contrast was apparent at a very early age. We have seen how Alfieri passed his time at Turin, in a kind of aristocratic prison of educational ignorance.

Goldoni's grandfather died when he was five years old, and left his family in great embarrassment. The poet's father went off to practise medicine at Perugia. His son followed him, acquired the rudiments of knowledge in that town, and then proceeded to study philosophy alone at Rimini. There was no man-servant or academy in his case. He was far too plebeian and too free. The boy lodged with a merchant, and got some smattering of Thomas Aquinas and the Peripatetics into his small brain, while he contrived to form a friendship with an acting company. They were on the wing for Venice in a coasting boat, which would touch at Chiozza, where Goldoni's mother then resided. The boy pleased them. Would he like the voyage? This offer seemed too tempting, and away he rushed, concealed himself on board, and made one of a merry motley shipload. 'Twelve persons, actors as well as actresses, a prompter, a machinist, a storekeeper, eight domestics, four chambermaids, two nurses, children of every age, cats, dogs, monkeys, parrots, birds, pigeons, and a lamb; it was another Noah's ark.' The young poet felt at home; how could a comic poet feel otherwise? They laughed, they sang, they danced; they ate and drank, and played at cards. 'Macaroni! Every one fell on it, and three dishes were devoured. We had also alamode beef, cold fowl, a loin of veal, a dessert, and excellent wine. What a charming dinner! No cheer like a good appetite.' Their harmony, however, was disturbed. The 'première amoureuse,' who, in spite of her rank and title, was ugly and cross, and required to be coaxed with cups of chocolate, lost her cat. She tried to kill the whole boat-load of beasts—cats, dogs, monkeys, parrots, pigeons, even the lamb stood in danger of her wrath. A regular quarrel ensued, was somehow set at peace, and all began to laugh again. This is a sample of Goldoni's youth. Comic pleasures, comic dangers; nothing

deep or lasting, but light and shadow cheerfully distributed, clouds lowering with storm, a distant growl of thunder, then a gleam of light and sunshine breaking overhead. He gets articled to an attorney at Venice, then goes to study law at Pavia; studies society instead, and flirts, and finally is expelled for writing satires. Then he takes a turn at medicine with his father in Friuli, and acts as clerk to the criminal chancellor at Chiozza.

Every employment seems easy to him, but he really cares for none but literature. He spends all his spare time in reading and in amusements, and begins to write a tragic opera. This proves, however, eminently unsuccessful, and he burns it in a comic fit of anger. One laughable love-affair in which he engaged at Udine exhibits his adventures in their truly comic aspect. It reminds us of the scene in 'Don Giovanni,' where Leporello personates the Don and deceives Donna Elvira. Goldoni had often noticed a beautiful young lady at church and on the public drives: she was attended by a waiting-maid, who soon perceived that her mistress had excited the young man's admiration, and who promised to befriend him in his suit. Goldoni was told to repair at night to the palace of his mistress, and to pour his passion forth beneath her window. Impatiently he waited for the trysting hour, conned his love-sentences, and gloried in the romance of the adventure. When night came, he found the window, and a veiled figure of a lady in the moonlight, whom he supposed at once to be his mistress. Her he eloquently addressed in the true style of Romeo's rapture, and she answered him. Night after night this happened, but sometimes he was a little troubled by a sound of ill-suppressed laughter interrupting the *tête-à-tête*. Meanwhile Teresa, the waiting-maid, received from his hands costly presents for her mistress, and made him promises on her part in exchange. As she proved

unable to fulfil them, Goldoni grew suspicious, and at last discovered that the veiled figure to whom he had poured out his tale of love was none other than Teresa, and that the laughter had proceeded from her mistress, whom the faithless waiting-maid regaled at her lover's expense. Thus ended this ridiculous matter. Goldoni was not, however, cured by his experience. One other love-affair rendered Udine too hot to hold him, and in consequence of a third he had to fly from Venice just when he was beginning to flourish there. At length he married comfortably and suitably, settling down into a quiet life with a woman whom, if he did not love her with passion, he at least respected and admired. Goldoni, in fact, had no real passion in his nature.

Alfieri, on the other hand, was given over to volcanic ebullitions of the most ungovernable hate and affection, joy and sorrow. The chains of love which Goldoni courted so willingly, Alfieri regarded with the greatest shyness. But while Goldoni healed his heart of all its bruises in a week or so, the tragic poet bore about him wounds that would not close. He enumerates three serious passions which possessed his whole nature, and at times deprived him almost of his reason. A Dutch lady first won his heart, and when he had to leave her, Alfieri suffered so intensely that he never opened his lips during the course of a long journey through Germany, Switzerland, and Piedmont. Fevers, and suicides attempted but interrupted, marked the termination of this tragic amour. His second passion had for its object an English lady. with whose injured husband he fought a duel, although his collar-bone was broken at the time. The lady proved unworthy of Alfieri as well as of her husband, and the poet left her in a most deplorable state of hopelessness and intellectual prostration. At last he formed a permanent affection for the wife of Prince Charles Edward, the Countess of Albany, in close

friendship with whom he lived after her husband's death. The society of this lady gave him perfect happiness; but it was founded on her lofty beauty, the pathos of her situation, and her intellectual qualities. Melpomene presided at this union, while Thalia blessed the nuptials of Goldoni. How characteristic also were the adventures which these two pairs of lovers encountered! Goldoni once carried his wife upon his back across two rivers in their flight from the Spanish to the Austrian camp at Rimini, laughing and groaning, and perceiving the humour of his situation all the time. Alfieri, on an occasion of even greater difficulty, was stopped with his illustrious friend at the gates of Paris in 1792. They were flying in post-chaises, with their servants and their baggage, from the devoted city, when a troop of *sansculottes* rushed on them, surged around the carriage, called them aristocrats, and tried to drag them off to prison. Alfieri, with his tall gaunt figure, pallid face, and red voluminous hair, stormed, raged, and raised his deep bass voice above the tumult. For half an hour he fought with them, then made his coachmen gallop through the gates, and scarcely halted till they got to Gravelines. By this prompt movement they escaped arrest and death at Paris. These two scenes would make agreeable companion pictures: Goldoni staggering beneath his wife across the muddy bed of an Italian stream—the smiling writer of agreeable plays, with his half-tearful helpmate ludicrous in her disasters; Alfieri mad with rage among Parisian Mænads, his princess quaking in her carriage, the air hoarse with cries, and death and safety trembling in the balance. It is no wonder that the one man wrote 'La Donna di Garbo' and the 'Cortese Veneziano,' while the other was inditing essays on Tyranny and dramas of 'Antigone,' 'Timoleon,' and 'Brutus.'

The difference between the men is seen no less remarkably

in regard to courage. Alfieri was a reckless rider, and astonished even English huntsmen by his desperate leaps. In one of them he fell and broke his collar-bone, but not the less he held his tryst with a fair lady, climbed her park gates, and fought a duel with her husband. Goldoni was a pantaloon for cowardice. In the room of an inn at Desenzano which he occupied together with a female fellow-traveller, an attempt was made to rob them by a thief at night. All Goldoni was able to do consisted in crying out for help, and the lady called him 'M. l'Abbé' ever after for his want of pluck. Goldoni must have been by far the more agreeable of the two. In all his changes from town to town of Italy he found amusement and brought gaiety. The sights, the theatres, the society aroused his curiosity. He trembled with excitement at the performance of his pieces, made friends with the actors, taught them, and wrote parts to suit their qualities. At Pisa he attended as a stranger the meeting of the Arcadian Academy, and at its close attracted all attention to himself by his clever improvisation. He was in truth a ready-witted man, pliable, full of resource, bred half a valet, half a Roman *græculus*. Alfieri saw more of Europe than Goldoni. France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, England, Spain, all parts of Italy he visited with restless haste. From land to land he flew, seeking no society, enjoying nothing, dashing from one inn door to another with his servants and his carriages, and thinking chiefly of the splendid stud of horses which he took about with him upon his travels. He was a lonely, stiff, self-engrossed, indomitable man. He could not rest at home: he could not bear to be the vassal of a king and breathe the air of courts. So he lived always on the wing, and ended by exiling himself from Sardinia in order to escape the trammels of paternal government. As for his tragedies, he wrote them to win laurels

from posterity. He never cared to see them acted; he bullied even his printers and correctors; he cast a glove down in defiance of his critics. Goldoni sought the smallest meed of approbation. It pleased him hugely in his old age to be Italian master to a French princess. Alfieri openly despised the public. Goldoni wrote because he liked to write; Alfieri, for the sake of proving his superior powers. Against Alfieri's hatred of Turin and its trivial solemnities, we have to set Goldoni's love of Venice and its petty pleasures. He would willingly have drunk chocolate and played at dominoes or picquet all his life on the Piazza di San Marco, when Alfieri was crossing the sierras on his Andalusian horse, and devouring a frugal meal of rice in solitude. Goldoni glided through life an easy man, with genial, venial thoughts; with a clear, gay, gentle temper; a true sense of what is good and just; and a heart that loved diffusively, if not too warmly. Many were the checks and obstacles thrown on his path; but round them or above them he passed nimbly, without scar or scathe. Poverty went close behind him, but he kept her off, and never felt the pinch of need. Alfieri strained and strove against the barriers of fate; a sombre, rugged man, proud, candid, and self-confident, who broke or bent all opposition; now moving solemnly with tragic pomp, now dashing passionately forward by the might of will. Goldoni drew his inspirations from the moment and surrounding circumstances. Alfieri pursued an ideal, slowly formed, but strongly fashioned and resolutely followed. Of wealth he had plenty and to spare, but he disregarded it, and was a Stoic in his mode of life. He was an unworldly man, and hated worldliness. Goldoni, but for his authorship, would certainly have grown a prosperous advocate, and died of gout in Venice. Goldoni liked smart clothes; Alfieri went always in black. Goldoni's fits of spleen—for he *was* melancholy now and then—lasted

a day or two, and disappeared before a change of place. Alfieri dragged his discontent about with him all over Europe, and let it interrupt his work and mar his intellect for many months together. Alfieri was a patriot, and hated France. Goldoni never speaks of politics, and praises Paris as a heaven on earth. The genial moralising of the latter appears childish by the side of Alfieri's terse philosophy and pregnant remarks on the development of character. What suits the page of Plautus would look poor in 'Œdipus' or 'Agamemnon.' Goldoni's memoirs are diffuse and flippant in their light French dress. They seem written to please. Alfieri's Italian style marches with dignity and Latin terseness. He rarely condescends to smile. He writes to instruct the world and to satisfy himself. Grim humour sometimes flashes out, as when he tells the story of the Order of Homer, which he founded. How different from Goldoni's naïve account of his little ovation in the theatre at Paris!

But it would be idle to carry on this comparison, already tedious. The life of Goldoni was one long scene of shifts and jests, of frequent triumphs and some failures, of lessons hard at times, but kindly. Passions and *ennui*, flashes of heroic patriotism, constant suffering and stoical endurance, art and love idealised, fill up the life of Alfieri. Goldoni clung much to his fellow-men, and shared their pains and pleasures. Alfieri spent many of his years in almost absolute solitude. On the whole character and deeds of the one man was stamped Comedy: the other was own son of Tragedy.

If, after reading the autobiographies of Alfieri and Goldoni, we turn to the perusal of their plays, we shall perceive that there is no better commentary on the works of an artist than his life, and no better life than one written by himself. The old style of criticism, which strove to separate an author's productions from his life, and even from the age in

which he lived, to set up an arbitrary canon of taste, and to select one or two great painters or poets as ideals because they seemed to illustrate that canon, has passed away. We are beginning to feel that art is a part of history and of physiology. That is to say, the artist's work can only be rightly understood by studying his age and temperament. Goldoni's versatility and want of depth induced him to write sparkling comedies. The merry life men passed at Venice in its years of decadence proved favourable to his genius. Alfieri's melancholy and passionate qualities, fostered in solitude, and aggravated by a tyranny he could not bear, led him irresistibly to tragic composition. Though a noble, his nobility only added to his pride, and insensibly his intellect had been imbued with the democratic sentiments which were destined to shake Europe in his lifetime. This, in itself, was a tragic circumstance, bringing him into close sympathy with the Brutus, the Prometheus, the Timoleon of ancient history. Goldoni's *bourgeoisie*, in the atmosphere of which he was born and bred, was essentially comic. The true comedy of manners, which is quite distinct from Shakspere's fancy or from Aristophanic satire, is always laid in middle life. Though Goldoni tried to write tragedies, they were unimpassioned, dull, and tame. He lacked altogether the fire, high-wrought nobility of sentiment, and sense of form essential for tragic art. On the other hand, Alfieri composed some comedies before his death which were devoid of humour, grace, and lightness. A strange elephantine eccentricity is their utmost claim to comic character. Indeed, the temper of Alfieri, ever in extremes, led him even to exaggerate the qualities of tragedy. He carried its severity to a pitch of dulness and monotony. His chiaroscuro was too strong; virtue and villany appearing in pure black and white upon his pages. His hatred of tyrants induced him to transgress

the rules of probability, so that it has been well said that if his wicked kings had really had such words of scorn and hatred thrown at them by their victims, they were greatly to be pitied. On the other hand, his pithy laconisms have often a splendidly tragical effect. There is nothing in the modern drama more rhetorically impressive, though spasmodic, than the well-known dialogue between Antigone and Creon:—

'*Cr.* Scegliesti?
'*Ant.* Ho scelto.
'*Cr.* Emon?
'*Ant.* Morte.
'*Cr.* L'avrai!'

Goldoni's comedies, again, have not enough of serious thought or of true creative imagination to be works of high art. They lean too much to the side of farce; they have none of the tragic salt which gives a dignity to Tartuffe. They are, in a word, almost too euethistically comic.

The contrast between these authors might lead us to raise the question long ago discussed by Socrates at Agathon's banquet—Can the same man write both comedies and tragedies? We in England are accustomed to read the serious and comic plays of Shakspere, Fletcher, Jonson, and to think that one poet could excel in either branch. The custom of the Elizabethan theatre obliged this double authorship; yet it must be confessed that Shakspere's comedies are not such comedies as Greek or Roman or French critics would admit. They are works of the purest imagination, wholly free from the laws of this world; while the tragedies of Fletcher have a melodramatic air equally at variance with the classical Melpomene. It may very seriously be doubted whether the same mind could produce, with equal power, a comedy like the

'Cortese Veneziano' and a tragedy like Alfieri's 'Brutus.' At any rate, returning to our old position, we find in these two men the very opposite conditions of dramatic genius. They are, as it were, specimens prepared by Nature for the instruction of those who analyse genius in its relations to temperament, to life, and to external circumstances.